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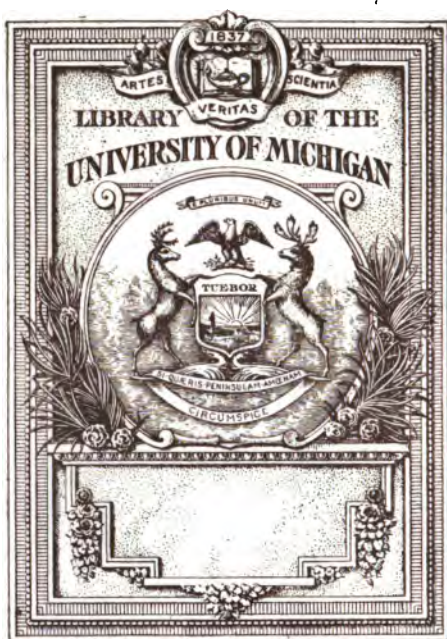
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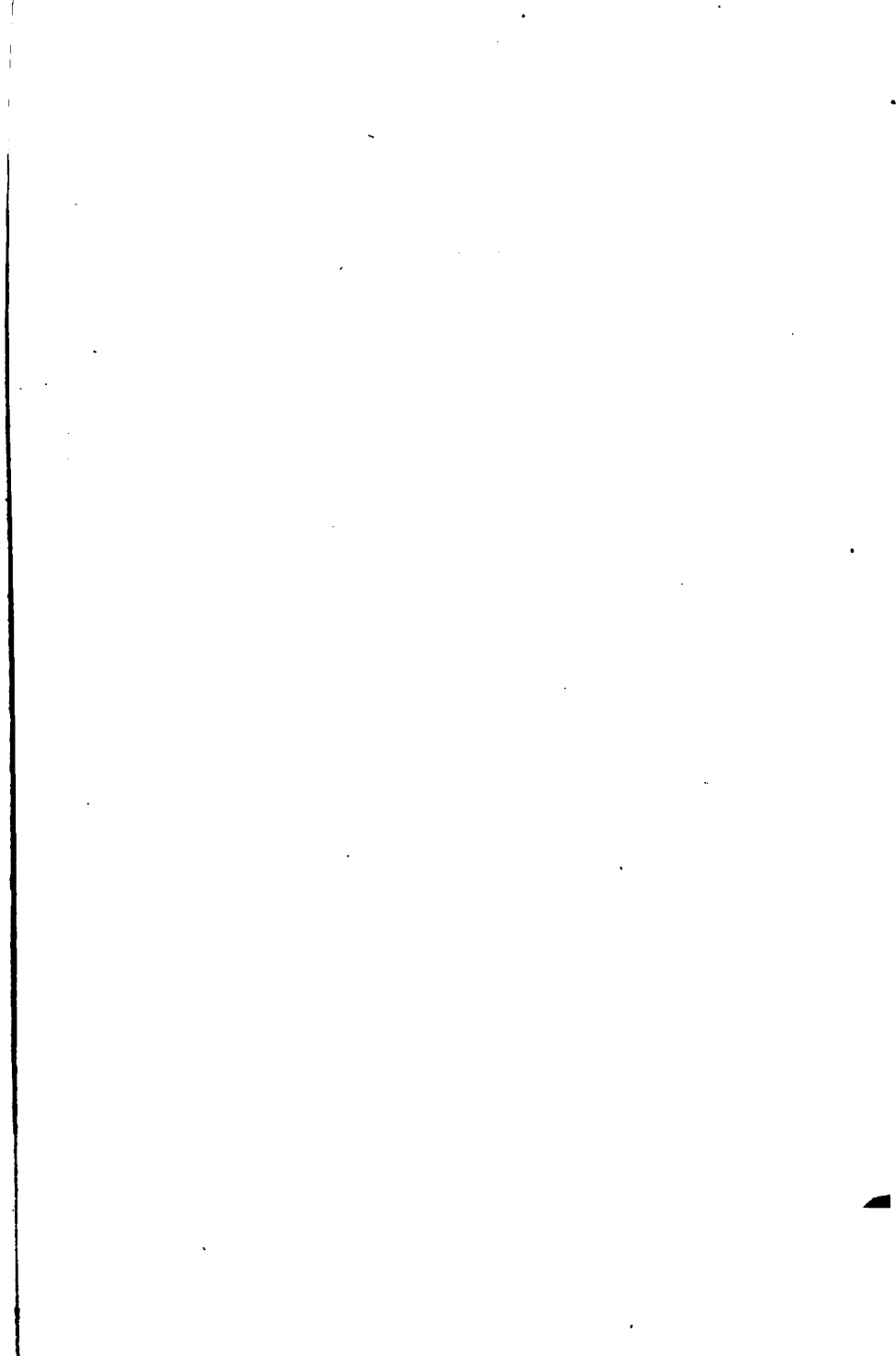
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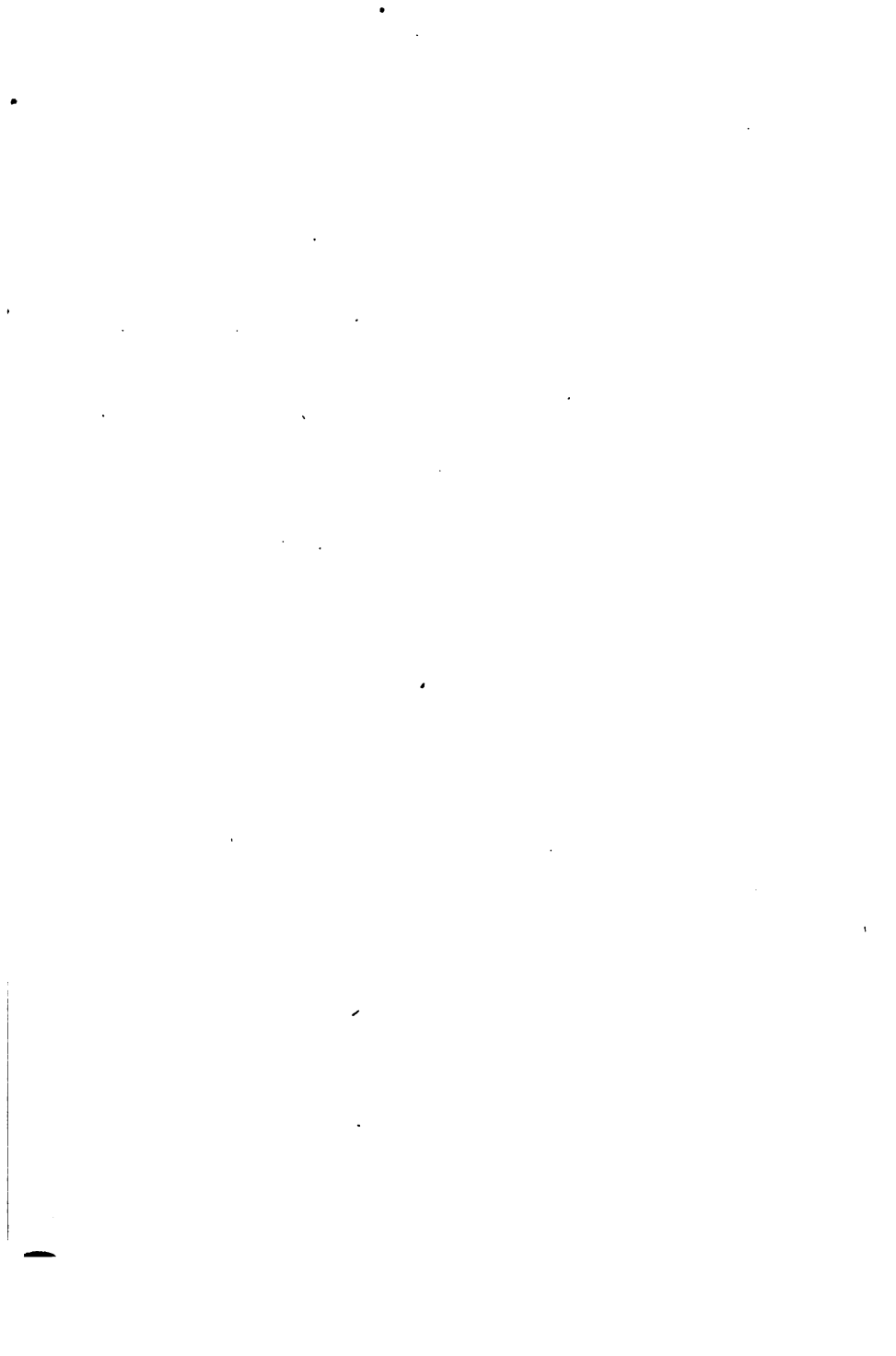


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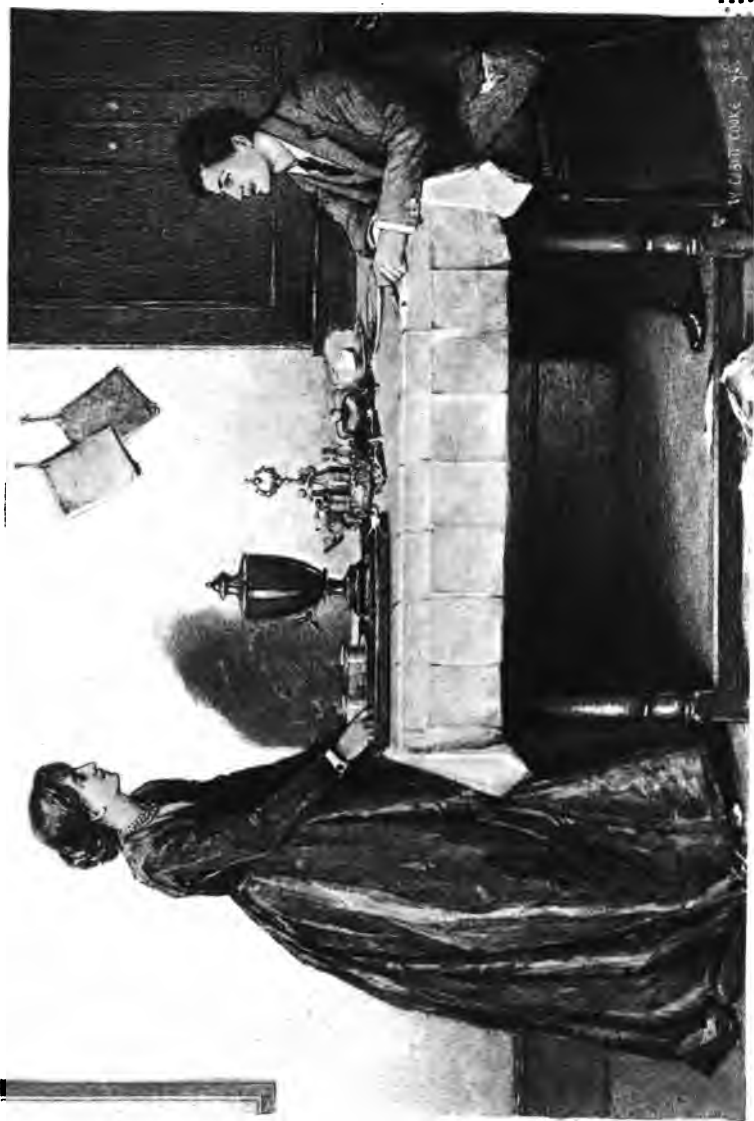
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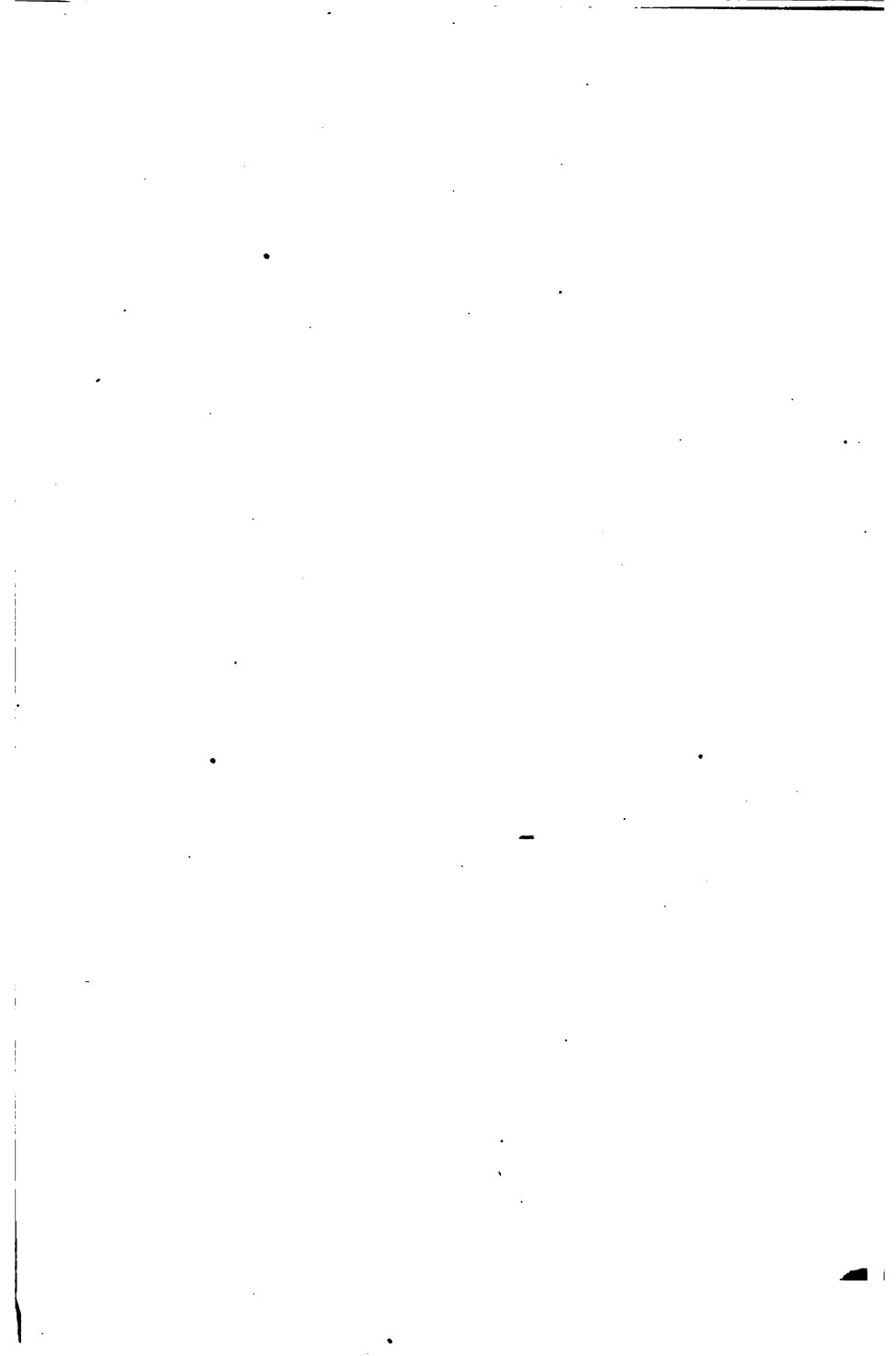


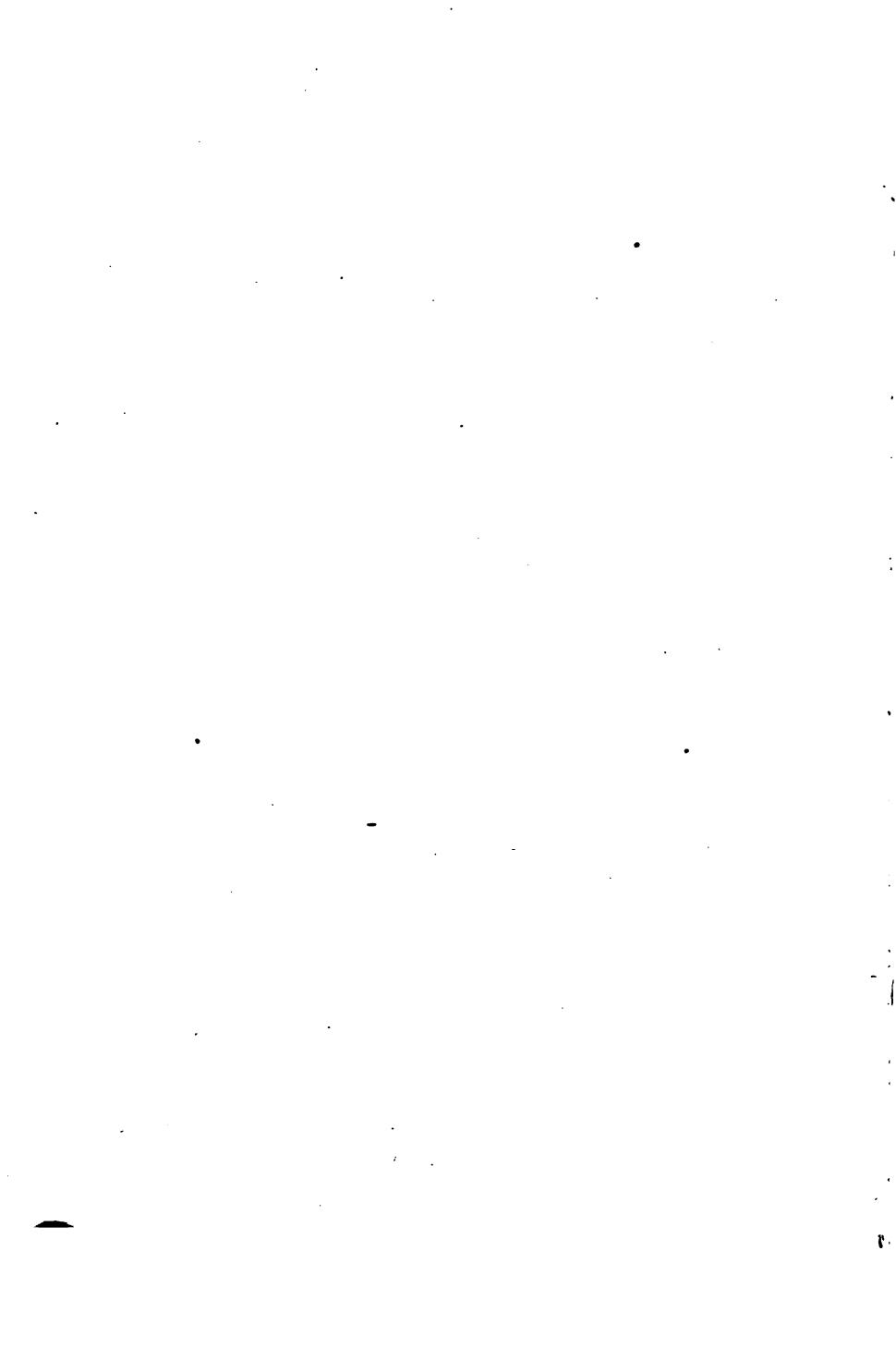






I looked up and beheld that pale and gentle face.





A DAY'S RIDE:

A Life's Romance.

TO WHICH IS ADDED



THAT BOY OF NORCOTT'S.

BY

CHARLES LEVER.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. CUBITT COOKE.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.
1902.

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A DAY'S RIDE:

A LIFE'S ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

I PREPARE TO SEEK ADVENTURES.

It has been said that any man, no matter how small and insignificant the post he may have filled in life, who will faithfully record the events in which he has borne a share, even though incapable of himself deriving profit from the lessons he has learned, may still be of use to others, — sometimes a guide, sometimes a warning. I hope this is true. I like to think it so, for I like to think that even I, — A. S. P., — if I cannot adorn a tale, may at least point a moral.

Certain families are remarkable for the way in which peculiar gifts have been transmitted for ages. Some have been great in arms, some in letters, some in statecraft, displaying in successive generations the same high qualities which had won their first renown. In an humble fashion, I may lay claim to belong to this category. My ancestors have been apothecaries for one hundred and forty-odd years. Joseph Potts, "drug and condiment man," lived in the reign of Queen Anne, at Lower Liffey Street, No. 87; and to be remembered passingly, has the name of Mr. Addison amongst his clients, — the illustrious writer having, as it would appear, a peculiar fondness for "Pott's linature," whatever that may have been; for the secret died out with my distinguished forefather. There was Michael Joseph Potts, "licensed for

chemicals," in Mary's Abbey, about thirty years later; and so we come on to Paul Potts and Son, and then to Launcelot Peter Potts, "Pharmaceutical Chemist to his Excellency and the Irish Court," the father of him who now bespeaks your indulgence.

My father's great misfortune in life was the ambition to rise above the class his family had adorned for ages. He had, as he averred, a soul above senna, and a destiny higher than black drop. He had heard of a tailor's apprentice becoming a great general. He had himself seen a wig-maker elevated to the woolsack; and he kept continually repeating, "Mine is the only walk in life that leads to no high rewards. What matters it whether my mixtures be addressed to the refined organization of rank, or the *dura ilia rasorum*? — I shall live and die an apothecary. From every class are men selected for honors save mine; and though it should rain baronetcies, the bloody hand would never fall to the lot of a compounding chemist."

"What do you intend to make of Algernon Sydney, Mr. Potts?" would say one of his neighbors. "Bring him up to your own business? A first-rate connection to start with in life."

"My own business, sir? I'd rather see him a chimney-sweep."

"But, after all, Mr. Potts, being so to say, at the head of your profession —"

"It is not a profession, sir. It is not even a trade. High science and skill have long since left our insulted and outraged ranks; we are mere commission agents for the sale of patent quackeries. What respect has the world any longer for the great phials of ruby, and emerald, and marine blue, which, at nightfall, were once the magical emblems of our mysteries, seen afar through the dim mists of lowering atmospheres, or throwing their lurid glare upon the passers-by? What man, now, would have the courage to adorn his surgery — I suppose you would prefer I should call it a 'shop' — with skeleton-fishes, snakes, or a stuffed alligator? Who, in this age of chemical infidelity, would surmount his door with the ancient symbols of our art, — the golden pestle and mortar? Why, sir, I'd as soon go forth to apply

leeches on a herald's tabard, or a suit of Milan mail. And what have they done, sir?" he would ask, with a roused indignation, — "what have they done by their reforms? In invading the mystery of medicine, they have ruined its prestige. The precious drops you once regarded as the essence of an elixir vitæ, and whose efficacy lay in your faith, are now so much strychnine, or creosote, which you take with fear and think over with foreboding."

I suppose it can only be ascribed to that perversity which seems a great element in human nature, that, exactly in the direct ratio of my father's dislike to his profession was *my* fondness for it. I used to take every opportunity of stealing into the laboratory, watching intently all the curious proceedings that went on there, learning the names and properties of the various ingredients, the gases, the minerals, the salts, the essences; and although, as may be imagined, science took, in these narrow regions, none of her loftiest flights, they were to me the most marvellous and high-soaring efforts of human intelligence. I was just at that period of life — the first opening of adolescence — when fiction and adventure have the strongest hold upon our nature, my mind filled with the marvels of Eastern romance, and imbued with a sentiment, strong as any conviction, that I was destined to a remarkable life. I passed days in dreamland, — what I should do in this or that emergency; how rescue myself from such a peril; how profit by such a stroke of fortune; by what arts resist the machinations of this adversary; how conciliate the kind favor of that. In the wonderful tales that I read, frequent mention was made of alchemy and its marvels; now the search was for some secret of endless wealth; now, it was for undying youth or undecaying beauty; while in other stories I read of men who had learned how to read the thoughts, trace the motives, and ultimately sway the hearts of their fellow-men, till life became to them a mere field for the exercise of their every will and caprice, throwing happiness and misery about them as the humor inclined. The strange life of the laboratory fitted itself exactly to this phase of my mind.

The wonders it displayed, the endless combinations and transformations it effected, were as marvellous as any

that imaginative fiction could devise; but even these were nothing compared to the mysterious influence of the place itself upon my nervous system, particularly when I found myself there alone. In the tales with which my head was filled, many of them the wild fancies of Grimm, Hoffman, or Musæus, nothing was more common than to read how some eager student of the black art, deep in the mystery of forbidden knowledge, had, by some chance combination, by some mere accidental admixture of this ingredient with that, suddenly arrived at the great SECRET, that terrible mystery which for centuries and centuries had evaded human search. How often have I watched the fluid as it boiled and bubbled in the retort, till I thought the air globules, as they came to the surface, observed a certain rhythm and order. Were these, words? Were they symbols of some hidden virtue in the liquid? Were there intelligences to whom these could speak, and thus reveal a wondrous history? And then, again, with what an intense eagerness have I gazed on the lurid smoke that arose from some smelting mass, now fancying that the vapor was about to assume form and substance, and now imagining that it lingered lazily, as though waiting for some cabalistic word of mine to give it life and being? How heartily did I censure the folly that had ranked alchemy amongst the absurdities of human invention! Why, rather, had not its facts been treasured and its discoveries recorded, so that in some future age a great intelligence arising might classify and arrange them, showing at least what were practicable and what were only evasive. Alchemists were, certainly, men of pure lives, self-denying and humble. They made their art no stepping-stone to worldly advancement or success; they sought no favor from princes, nor any popularity from the people; but, retired and estranged from all the pleasures of the world, followed their one pursuit, unnoticed and unfriended. How cruel, therefore, to drag them forth from their lonely cells, and expose them to the gaping crowd as devil worshippers! How inhuman to denounce men whose only crimes were lives of solitude and study! The last words of Peter von Vordt, burned for a wizard, at Haarlem, in 1306, were, "Had they left this poor head a little longer on my shoulders, it would have done more for human happiness than all this bonfire!"

How rash and presumptuous is it, besides, to set down any fixed limits to man's knowledge! Is not every age an advance upon its predecessors, and are not the commonest acts of our present civilization perfect miracles as compared with the usages of our ancestors? But why do I linger on this theme, which I only introduced to illustrate the temper of my boyish days? As I grew older, books of chivalry and romance took possession of my mind, and my passion grew for lives of adventure. Of all kinds of existence, none seemed to me so enviable as that of those men who, regarding life as a vast ocean, hoisted sail, and set forth, not knowing nor caring whither, but trusting to their own manly spirit for extrication out of whatever difficulties might beset them. What a narrow thing, after all, was our modern civilization, with all its forms and conventionalities, with its gradations of rank and its orders! How hopeless for the adventurous spirit to war with the stern discipline of an age that marshalled men in ranks like soldiers, and told that each could only rise by successive steps! How often have I wondered was there any more of adventure left in life? Were there incidents in store for him who, in the true spirit of an adventurer, should go in search of them? As for the newer worlds of Australia and America, they did not possess for me much charm. No great association linked them with the past; no echo came out of them of that heroic time of feudalism, so peopled with heart-stirring characters. The life of the bush or the prairie had its incidents, but they were vulgar and commonplace; and worse, the associates and companions of them were more vulgar still. Hunting down Pawnees or buffaloes was as mean and ignoble a travesty of feudal adventure as was the gold diggings at Bendigo of the learned labors of the alchemist. The perils were unexciting, the rewards prosaic and commonplace. No. I felt that Europe — in some remote regions — and the East — in certain less visited tracts — must be the scenes best suited to my hopes. With considerable labor I could spell my way through a German romance, and I saw, in the stories of Fouqué, and even of Goethe, that there still survived in the mind of Germany many of the features which gave the coloring to a feudal period. There was, at least, a dreamy in-

difference to the present, a careless abandonment to what the hour might bring forth, so long as the dreamer was left to follow out his fancies in all their mysticism, that lifted men out of the vulgarities of this work-o'-day world; and I longed to see a society where learning consented to live upon the humblest pittance, and beauty dwelt unflattered in obscurity.

I was now entering upon manhood; and my father — having, with that ambition so natural to an Irish parent who aspires highly for his only son, destined me for the bar — made me a student of Trinity College, Dublin.

What a shock to all the romance of my life were the scenes into which I now was thrown! With hundreds of companions to choose from, I found not one congenial to me. The reading men, too deeply bent upon winning honors, would not waste a thought upon what could not advance their chances of success. The idle, only eager to get through their career undetected in their ignorance, passed lives of wild excess or stupid extravagance.

What was I to do amongst such associates? What I did do, — avoid them, shun them, live in utter estrangement from all their haunts, their ways, and themselves. If the proud man who has achieved success in life encounters immense difficulties when, separating himself from his fellows, he acknowledges no companionship, nor admits any to his confidence, it may be imagined what must be the situation of one who adopts this isolation without any claim to superiority whatever. As can easily be supposed, I was the butt of my fellow students, the subject of many sarcasms and practical jokes. The whole of my Freshman year was a martyrdom. I had no peace, was rhymed on by poets, caricatured by draughtsmen, till the name of Potts became proverbial for all that was eccentric, ridiculous, and absurd.

Curran has said, "One can't draw an indictment against a nation;" in the same spirit did I discover "one cannot fight his whole division." For a while I believe I experienced a sort of heroism in my solitary state; I felt the spirit of a Coriolanus in my heart, and muttered, "I banish *you*!" but this self-supplied esteem did not last long, and I fell into a settled melancholy. The horrible truth was gradually

forcing its way slowly, clearly, through the mists of my mind, that there might be something in all this sarcasm, and I can remember to this hour, the day — ay, and the very place — wherein the questions flashed across me: Is my hair as limp, my nose as long, my back as arched, my eyes as green as they have pictured them? Do I drawl so fearfully in my speech? Do I drag my heavy feet along so ungracefully? Good heavens! have they possibly a grain of fact to sustain all this fiction against me?

And if so, — horrible thought, — am I the stuff to go forth and seek adventures? Oh, the ineffable bitterness of this reflection! I remember it in all its anguish, and even now, after years of such experience as have befallen few men, I can recall the pain it cost me. While I was yet in the paroxysm of that sorrow, which assured me that I was not made for doughty deeds, nor to captivate some fair princess, I chanced to fall upon a little German volume entitled “Wald Wandelungen und Abentheure,” von Heinrich Stebbe. Forest rambles and adventures, and of a student, too! for so Herr Stebbe announces himself, in a short introduction to the reader. I am not going into any account of his book. It is in Voss’s Leipzig Catalogue, and not unworthy of perusal by those who are sufficiently imbued with Germanism to accept the changeful moods of a mystical mind, with all its visionary glimpses of light and shade, its doubts, fears, hopes, and fancies, in lieu of real incidents and actual events. Of adventures, properly speaking, he had none. The people he met, the scenes in which he bore his part, were as commonplace as need be. The whole narrative never soared above that bread and butter life — Butterbrod Leben — which Germany accepts as romance; but, meanwhile, the reflex of whatever passed around him in the narrator’s own mind was amusing; so ingeniously did he contrive to interweave the imaginary with the actual, throwing over the most ordinary pictures of life a sort of hazy indistinctness, — meet atmosphere for mystical creation.

If I did not always sympathize with him in his brain-wrought wanderings, I never ceased to take pleasure in his description of scenery, and the heartfelt delight he experi-

enced in journeying through a world so beautiful and so varied. There was also a little woodcut frontispiece which took my fancy much, representing him as he stood leaning on his horse's mane, gazing rapturously on the Elbe, from one of the cliffs off the Saxon Switzerland. How peaceful he looked, with his long hair waving gracefully on his neck, and his large soft eyes turned on the scene beneath him! His clasped hands, as they lay on the horse's mane, imparted a sort of repose, too, that seemed to say, "I could linger here ever so long." Nor was the horse itself without a significance in the picture; he was a long-maned, long-tailed, patient-looking beast, well befitting an enthusiast, who doubtless took but little heed of how he went or where. If his lazy eye denoted lethargy, his broad feet and short legs vouched for his sure-footedness.

Why should not I follow Stebbe's example? Surely there was nothing too exalted or extravagant in his plan of life. It was simply to see the world as it was, with the aid of such combinations as a fertile fancy could contribute; not to distort events, but to arrange them, just as the landscape painter in the license of his craft moves that massive rock more to the foreground, and throws that stone pine a little further to the left of his canvas. There was, indeed, nothing to prevent my trying the experiment. Ireland was not less rich in picturesque scenery than Germany, and if she boasted no such mighty stream as the Elbe, the banks of the Blackwater and the Nore were still full of woodland beauty; and, then, there was lake scenery unrivalled throughout Europe.

I turned to Stebbe's narrative for details of his outfit. His horse he bought at Nordheim for two hundred and forty gulden, — about ten pounds; his saddle and knapsack cost him a little more than forty shillings; with his map, guide-book, compass, and some little extras, all were comprised within twenty pounds sterling, — surely not too costly an equipage for one who was adventuring on a sea wide as the world itself.

As *my* trial was a mere experiment, to be essayed on the most limited scale, I resolved not to buy, but only hire a horse, taking him by the day, so that if any change of mind

or purpose supervened I should not find myself in any embarrassment.

A fond uncle had just left me a legacy of a hundred pounds, which, besides, was the season of the long vacation; thus did everything combine to favor the easy execution of a plan which I determined forthwith to put into practice.

"Something quiet and easy to ride, sir, you said?" repeated Mr. Dyer after me, as I entered his great establishment for the sale and hire of horses. "Show the gentleman four hundred and twelve."

"Oh, Heaven forbid!" I exclaimed, in ignorance; "such a number would only confuse me."

"You mistake me, sir," blandly interposed the dealer; "I meant the horse that stands at that number. Lead him out, Tim. He's gentle as a lamb, sir, and, if you find he suits you, can be had for a song, — I mean a ten pound note."

"Has he a long mane and tail?" I asked, eagerly.

"The longest tail and the fullest mane I ever saw. But here he comes." And with the word, there advanced towards us, at a sort of easy amble, a small-sized cream-colored horse, with white mane and tail. Knowing nothing of horsemesh, I was fain to content myself with such observations as other studies might supply me with; and so I closely examined his head, which was largely developed in the frontal region, with moral qualities fairly displayed. He had memory large, and individuality strong; nor was wit, if it exist in the race, deficient. Over the orbital region the depressions were deep enough to contain my closed fist, and when I remarked upon them to the groom, he said, "'T is his teeth will tell you the rayson of that;" a remark which I suspect was a sarcasm upon my general ignorance.

I liked the creature's eye. It was soft, mild, and contemplative; and although not remarkable for brilliancy, possessed a subdued lustre that promised well for temper and disposition.

"Ten shillings a day, — make it three half-crowns by the week, sir. You'll never hit upon the like of him again," said the dealer, hurriedly, as he passed me, on his other avocations.

"Better not lose him, sir; he's well known at Batty's, and they'll have him in the circus again if they see him. Wish you saw him with his fore-legs on a table, ringing the bell for his breakfast."

"I'll take him by the week, though, probably, a day or two will be all I shall need."

"Four hundred and twelve for Mr. Potts," Dycer screamed out. "Shoes removed, and to be ready in the morning."

CHAPTER II.

BLONDEL AND I SET OUT.

I HAD heard and read frequently of the exhilarating sensations of horse exercise. My fellow-students were full of stories of the hunting-field and the race-course. Wherever, indeed, a horse figured in a narrative, there was an almost certainty of meeting some incident to stir the blood and warm up enthusiasm. Even the passing glimpses one caught of sporting-prints in shop-windows were suggestive of the pleasure imparted by a noble and chivalrous pastime.

I never closed my eyes all night, revolving such thoughts in my head. I had so worked up my enthusiasm that I felt like one who is about to cross the frontier of some new land where people, language, ways, and habits are all unknown to him. "By this hour to-morrow night," thought I, "I shall be in the land of strangers, who have never seen, nor so much as heard of me. There will invade no traditions of the scoffs and jibes I have so long endured; none will have received the disparaging estimate of my abilities, which my class-fellows love to propagate; I shall simply be the traveller who arrived at sundown mounted on a cream-colored palfrey, — a stranger, sad-looking, but gentle, withal, of courteous address, blandly demanding lodging for the night. "Look to my horse, ostler," shall I say, as I enter the honeysuckle-covered porch of the inn. "Blondel" — I will call him Blondel — "is accustomed to kindly usage." With what quiet dignity, the repose of a conscious position, do I follow the landlord as he shows me to my room. It is humble, but neat and orderly. I am contented. I tell him so. I am sated and wearied of luxury; sick of a gilded and glittering existence. I am in search of repose and solitude. I order my tea; and,

if I ask the name of the village, I take care to show by my inattention that I have not heard the answer, nor do I care for it.

Now I should like to hear how they are canvassing me in the bar, and what they think of me in the stable. I am, doubtless, a peer, or a peer's eldest son. I am a great writer, the wondrous poet of the day; or the pre-Raphaelite artist; or I am a youth heart-broken by infidelity in love; or, mayhap, a dreadful criminal. I liked this last the best, the interest was so intense; not to say that there is, to men who are not constitutionally courageous, a strong pleasure in being able to excite terror in others.

But I hear a horse's feet on the silent street. I look out. Day is just breaking. Tim is holding Blondel at the door. My hour of adventure has struck, and noiselessly descending the stairs, I issue forth.

"He is a trifle tender on the fore-feet, your honor," said Tim, as I mounted; "but when you get him off the stones on a nice piece of soft road, he'll go like a four-year-old."

"But he is young, Tim, is n't he?" I asked, as I tendered him my half-crown.

"Well, not to tell your honor a lie, he is not," said Tim, with the energy of a man whose veracity had cost him little less than a spasm.

"How old would you call him, then?" I asked, in that affected ease that seemed to say, "Not that it matters to me if he were Methuselah."

"I could n't come to his age exactly, your honor," he replied, "but I remember seeing him fifteen years ago, dancing a hornpipe, more by token for his own benefit; it was at Cooke's Circus, in Abbey Street, and there was n't a hair's difference between him now and then, except, perhaps, that he had a star on the forehead, where you just see the mark a little darker now."

"But that is a star, plain enough," said I, half vexed.

"Well, it is, and it is not," muttered Tim, doggedly, for he was not quite satisfied with my right to disagree with him.

"He's gentle, at all events?" I said, more confidently.

"He's a lamb!" replied Tim. "If you were to see the

way he lets the Turks run over his back, when he's wounded in Timour the Tartar, you would n't believe he was a livin' baste."

"Poor fellow!" said I, caressing him. He turned his mild eye upon me, and we were friends from that hour.

What a glorious morning it was, as I gained the outskirts of the city, and entered one of those shady alleys that lead to the foot of the Dublin mountains! The birds were opening their morning hymn, and the earth, still fresh from the night dew, sent up a thousand delicious perfumes. The road on either side was one succession of handsome villas or ornamental cottages, whose grounds were laid out in the perfection of landscape gardening. There were but few persons to be seen at that early hour, and in the smokeless chimneys and closed shutters I could read that all slept, — slept in that luxurious hour when Nature unveils, and seems to revel in the sense of unregarded loveliness. "Ah, Potts," said I, "thou hast chosen the wiser part; thou wilt see the world after thine own guise, and not as others see it." Has my reader not often noticed that in a picture-gallery the slightest change of place, a move to the left or right, a chance approach or retreat, suffices to make what seemed a hazy confusion of color and gloss a rich and beautiful picture? So is it in the actual world, and just as much depends on the point from which objects are viewed. Do not be discouraged, then, by the dark aspects of events. It may be that by the slightest move to this side or to that, some unlooked-for sunlight shall slant down and light up all the scene. Thus musing, I gained a little grassy strip that ran along the roadside, and, gently touching Blondel with my heel, he broke out into a delightful canter. The motion, so easy and swimming, made it a perfect ecstasy to sit there floating at will through the thin air, with a moving panorama of wood, water, and mountain around me.

Emerging at length from the thickly wooded plain, I began the ascent of the Three Rock Mountain, and, in my slackened speed, had full time to gaze upon the bay beneath me, broken with many a promontory, backed by the broad bluff of Howth, and the more distant Lambay. No, it is *not* finer than Naples. I did not say it was; but, seeing it as I then

saw it, I thought it could not be surpassed. Indeed, I went further, and defied Naples in this fashion:—

“Though no volcano’s lurid light
Over thy blue sea steals along,
Nor Pescator beguiles the night
With cadence of his simple song;

“Though none of dark Calabria’s daughters
With tinkling lute thy echoes wake,
Mingling their voices with the waters,
As ‘neath the prow the ripples break;

“Although no cliffs with myrtle crown’d,
Reflected in thy tide, are seen,
Nor olives, bending to the ground,
Relieve the laurel’s darker green;

“Yet — yet — ”

Ah, there was the difficulty, — I had begun with the plaintiff, and I really had n’t a word to say for the defendant; and so, voting comparisons odious, I set forward on my journey.

As I rode into Enniskerry to breakfast, I had the satisfaction of overhearing some very flattering comments upon Blondel, which rather consoled me for some less laudatory remarks upon my own horsemanship. By the way, can there possibly be a more ignorant sarcasm than to say a man rides like a tailor? Why, of all trades, who so constantly sits straddle-legged as a tailor? and yet he is especial mark of this impertinence.

I pushed briskly on after breakfast, and soon found myself in the deep shady woods that lead to the Dargle. I hurried through the picturesque demesne, associated as it was with a thousand little vulgar incidents of city junketings, and rode on for the Glen of the Downs. Blondel and I had now established a most admirable understanding with each other. It was a sort of reciprocity by which *I* bound myself never to control *him*, he in turn consenting not to unseat *me*. He gave the initiative to the system, by setting off at his pleasant little rocking canter whenever he chanced upon a bit of favorable ground, and invariably

pulled up when the road was stony or uneven; thus showing me that he was a beast with what Lord Brougham would call "a wise discretion." In like manner he would halt to pluck any stray ears of wild oats that grew along the hedge sides, and occasionally slake his thirst at convenient streamlets. If I dismounted to walk at his side, he moved along unheld, his head almost touching my elbow, and his plaintive blue eye mildly beaming on me with an expression that almost spoke, — nay, it did speak. I'm sure I felt it, as though I could swear to it, whispering, "Yes, Potts, two more friendless creatures than ourselves are not easy to find. The world wants not either of us; not that we abuse it, despise it, or treat it ungenerously, — rather the reverse, we incline favorably towards it, and would, occasion serving, befriend it; but we are not, so to say, 'of it.' There may be, here and there, a man or a horse that would understand or appreciate us, but they stand alone, — they are not belonging to classes. They are, like ourselves, exceptional." If his expression said this much, there was much unspoken melancholy in his sad glance, also, which seemed to say, "What a deal of sorrow could I reveal if I might! — what injuries, what wrong, what cruel misconceptions of my nature and disposition, what mistaken notions of my character and intentions! What pretentious stupidity, too, have I seen preferred before me, — creatures with, mayhap, a glossier coat or a more silky forelock — " "Ah, Blondel, take courage, — men are just as ungenerous, just as erring!" "Not that I have not had my triumphs, too," he seemed to say, as, cocking his ears, and ambling with a more elevated toss of the head, his tail would describe an arch like a waterfall; "no salmon-colored silk stockings danced sarabands on *my* back; I was always ridden in the Haute École by Monsieur l'Etrier himself, the stately gentleman in jack-boots and long-waisted dress-coat, whose five minutes no persuasive bravos could ever prolong." I thought — nay, I was certain at times — that I could read in his thoughtful face the painful sorrows of one who had outlived popular favor, and who had survived to see himself supplanted and dethroned.

There are no two destinies which chime in so well together

as that of him who is beaten down by sheer distrust of himself, and that of the man who has seen better days. Although the one be just entering on life, while the other is going out of it, if they meet on the threshold, they stop to form a friendship. Now, though Blondel was not a man, he supplied to my friendlessness the place of one.

The sun was near its setting, as I rode down the little hill into the village of Ashford, a picturesque little spot in the midst of mountains, and with a bright clear stream bounding through it, as fearlessly as though in all the liberty of open country. I tried to make my entrance what stage people call effective. I threw myself, albeit a little jaded, into an attitude of easy indifference, slouched my hat to one side, and suffered the sprig of laburnum, with which I had adorned it, to droop in graceful guise over one shoulder. The villagers stared; some saluted me; and taken, perhaps, by the cool acquiescence of my manner, as I returned the courtesy, seemed well disposed to believe me of some note.

I rode into the little stable-yard of the "Lamb" and dismounted. I gave up my horse, and walked into the inn. I don't know how others feel it, — I greatly doubt if they will have the honesty to tell, — but for myself, I confess that I never entered an inn or an hotel without a most uncomfortable conflict within: a struggle made up of two very antagonistic impulses, — the wish to seem something important, and a lively terror lest the pretence should turn out to be costly. Thus swayed by opposing motives, I sought a compromise by assuming that I was incog.; for the present a nobody, to be treated without any marked attention, and to whom the acme of respect would be a seeming indifference.

"What is your village called?" I said, carelessly, to the waiter, as he laid the cloth.

"Ashford, your honor. 'T is down in all the books," answered the waiter.

"Is it noted for anything, or is there anything remarkable in the neighborhood?"

"Indeed, there is, sir, and plenty. There's Glenmalure and the Devil's Glen; and there's Mr. Snow Malone's place, that everybody goes to see; and there's the fishing of

Doyle's river, — trout, eight, nine, maybe twelve, pounds' weight; and there's Mr. Reeve's cottage — a Swiss cottage belike — at Kinmacreeedy; but, to be sure, there must be an order for that."

"I never take much trouble," I said indolently. "Who have you got in the house at present?"

"There's young Lord Keldrum, sir, and two more with him, for the fishing; and the next room to you here, there's Father Dyke, from Inistioge, and he's going, by the same token, to dine with the Lord to-day."

"Don't mention to his Lordship that I am here," said I, hastily. "I desire to be quite unknown down here." The waiter promised obedience, without vouchsafing any misgivings as to the possibility of his disclosing what he did not know.

To his question as to my dinner, I carelessly said, as if I were in a West-end club, "Never mind soup, — a little fish, — a cutlet and a partridge. Or order it yourself, — I am indifferent." The waiter had scarcely left the room when I was startled by the sound of voices so close to me as to seem at my side. They came from a little wooden balcony to the adjoining room, which, by its pretentious bow-window, I recognized to be the state apartment of the inn, and now in the possession of Lord Keldrum and his party. They were talking away in that gay, rattling, discursive fashion very young men do amongst each other, and discussed fishing-flies, the neighboring gentlemen's seats, and the landlady's niece.

"By the way, Kel," cried one, "it was in your visit to the bar that you met your priest, was n't it?"

"Yes; I offered him a cigar, and we began to chat together, and so I asked him to dine with us to-day."

"And he refused?"

"Yes; but he has since changed his mind, and sent a message to say he'll be with us at eight."

"I should like to see your father's face, Kel, when he heard of your entertaining the Reverend Father Dyke at dinner."

"Well, I suppose he would say it was carrying conciliation a little too far; but as the adage says, *À la guerre —*"

At this juncture, another burst in amongst them, calling out, "You'd never guess who's just arrived here, in strict incog., and having bribed Mike, the waiter, to silence. Burgoyne!"

"Not Jack Burgoyne?"

"Jack himself. I had the portrait so correctly drawn by the waiter, that there's no mistaking him; the long hair, green complexion, sheepish look, all perfect. He came on a hack, a little cream-colored pad he got at Dycer's, and fancies he's quite unknown."

"What *can* he be up to now?"

"I think I have it," said his Lordship. "Courtenay has got two three-year-olds down here at his uncle's, one of them under heavy engagements for the spring meetings. Master Jack has taken a run down to have a look at them."

"By Jove, Kel, you're right! he's always wide awake, and that stupid leaden-eyed look he has, has done him good service in the world."

"I say, old Oxley, shall we dash in and unearth him? Or shall we let him fancy that we know nothing of his being here at all?"

"What does Hammond say?"

"I'd say, leave him to himself," replied a deep voice; "you can't go and see him without asking him to dinner; and he'll walk into us after, do what we will."

"Not, surely, if we don't play," said Oxley.

"Would n't he, though? Why, he'd screw a bet out of a bishop."

"I'd do with him as Tomkinson did," said his Lordship; "he had him down at his lodge in Scotland, and bet him fifty pounds that he could n't pass a week without a wager. Jack booked the bet and won it, and Tomkinson franked the company."

"What an artful villain my counterpart must be!" I said. I stared in the glass to see if I could discover the sheepishness they laid such stress on. I was pale, to be sure, and my hair a light brown, but so was Shelley's; indeed, there was a wild, but soft expression in my eyes that resembled his, and I could recognize many things in our natures that seemed to correspond. It was the poetic dreaminess, the

lofty abstractedness from all the petty cares of every-day life which vulgar people set down as simplicity; and thus, —

“The soaring thoughts that reached the stars,
Seemed ignorance to *them*.”

As I uttered the consolatory lines, I felt two hands firmly pressed over my eyes, while a friendly voice called out, “Found out, old fellow! run fairly to earth!” “Ask him if he knows you,” whispered another, but in a voice I could catch.

“Who am I, Jack?” cried the first speaker.

“Situating as I now am,” I replied, “I am unable to pronounce; but of one thing I am assured, — I am certain I am not called Jack.”

The slow and measured intonation of my voice seemed to electrify them, for my captor relinquished his hold and fell back, while the two others, after a few seconds of blank surprise, burst into a roar of laughter; a sentiment which the other could not refrain from, while he struggled to mutter some words of apology.

“Perhaps I can explain your mistake,” I said blandly; “I am supposed to be extremely like the Prince of Salms Hökinshauven —”

“No, no!” burst in Lord Keldrum, whose voice I recognized, “we never saw the Prince. The blunder of the waiter led us into this embarrassment; we fancied you were —”

“Mr. Burgoyne,” I chimed in.

“Exactly, — Jack Burgoyne; but you’re not a bit like him.”

“Strange, then; but I’m constantly mistaken for him; and when in London, I’m actually persecuted by people calling out, ‘When did you come up, Jack?’ ‘Where do you hang out?’ ‘How long do you stay?’ ‘Dine with me to-day — to-morrow — Saturday?’ and so on; and although, as I have remarked, these are only so many embarrassments for me, they all show how popular must be my prototype.” I had purposely made this speech of mine a little long, for I saw by the disconcerted looks of the party

that they did not see how to wind up "the situation," and, like all awkward men, I grew garrulous where I ought to have been silent. While I rambled on, Lord Keldrum exchanged a word or two with one of his friends; and as I finished, he turned towards me, and, with an air of much courtesy, said, —

"We owe you every apology for this intrusion, and hope you will pardon it; there is, however, but one way in which we can certainly feel assured that we have your forgiveness, — that is, by your joining us. I see that your dinner is in preparation, so pray let me countermand it, and say that you are our guest."

"Lord Keldrum," said one of the party, presenting the speaker; "my name is Hammond, and this is Captain Oxley, Coldstream Guards."

I saw that this move required an exchange of ratifications, and so I bowed, and said, "Algernon Sydney Potts."

"There are Staffordshire Pottses?"

"No relation," I said stiffly. It was Hammond who made the remark, and with a sneering manner that I could not abide.

"Well, Mr. Potts, it is agreed," said Lord Keldrum, with his peculiar urbanity, "we shall see you at eight. No dressing. You'll find us in this fishing-costume you see now."

I trust my reader, who has dined out any day he pleased and in any society he has liked these years past, will forgive me if I do not enter into any detailed account of my reasons for accepting this invitation. Enough if I freely own that to me, A. S. Potts, such an unexpected honor was about the same surprise as if I had been announced governor of a colony, or bishop in a new settlement.

"At eight sharp, Mr. Potts."

"The next door down the passage."

"Just as you are, remember!" were the three parting admonitions with which they left me.

CHAPTER III.

TRUTH NOT ALWAYS IN WINE.

Who has not experienced the charm of the first time in his life, when totally removed from all the accidents of his station, the circumstance of his fortune, and his other belongings, he has taken his place amongst perfect strangers, and been estimated by the claims of his own individuality? Is it not this which gives the almost ecstasy of our first tour, — our first journey? There are none to say, "Who is this Potts that gives himself these airs?" "What pretension has he to say this, or order that?" "What would old Peter say if he saw his son to-day?" with all the other "What has the world come to?" and "What are we to see next?" I say it is with a glorious sense of independence that one sees himself emancipated from all these restraints, and recognizes his freedom to be that which nature has made him.

As I sat on Lord Keldrum's left, — Father Dyke was on his right, — was I in any real quality other than I ever am? Was my nature different, my voice, my manner, my social tone, as I received all the bland attentions of my courteous host? And yet, in my heart of hearts, I felt that if it were known to that polite company I was the son of Peter Potts, 'pothecary, all my conversational courage would have failed me. I would not have dared to assert fifty things I now declared, nor vouched for a hundred that I as assuredly guaranteed. If I had had to carry about me traditions of the shop in Mary's Abbey, the laboratory, and the rest of it, how could I have had the nerve to discuss any of the topics on which I now pronounced so authoritatively? And yet, these were all accidents of my existence, — no more

ME than was the color of *his* whiskers mine who vaccinated me for cow-pock. The man Potts was himself through all; he was neither compounded of senna and salts, nor amalgamated with sarsaparilla and the acids; but by the cruel laws of a harsh conventionality it was decreed otherwise, and the trade of the father descends to the son in every estimate of all he does and says and thinks. The converse of the proposition I was now to feel in the success I obtained in this company. I was as the Germans would say, "Der Herr Potts SELBST, nicht nach seinen Begebenheiten" — the man Potts, not the creature of his belongings.

The man thus freed from his "antecedents," and owning no "relatives," feels like one to whom a great, a most unlimited, credit has been opened, in matter of opinion. Not reduced to fashion his sentiments by some supposed standard becoming his station, he roams at will over the broad prairie of life, enough if he can show cause why he says this or thinks that, without having to defend himself for his parentage, and the place he was born in. Little wonder if, with such a sum to my credit, I drew largely on it; little wonder if I were dogmatical and demonstrative; little wonder if, when my reason grew wearied with facts, I reposed on my imagination in fiction.

Be it remembered, however, that I only became what I have set down here after an excellent dinner, a considerable quantity of champagne, and no small share of claret, strong-bodied enough to please the priest. From the moment we sat down to table, I conceived for him a sort of distrust. He was painfully polite and civil; he had a soft, slippery, Clare accent; but there was a malicious twinkle in his eye that showed he was by nature satirical. Perhaps because we were more reading men than the others that it was we soon found ourselves pitted against each other in argument, and this not upon one, but upon every possible topic that turned up. Hammond, I found, also stood by the priest; Oxley was *my* backer; and his Lordship played umpire. Dyke was a shrewd, sarcastic dog in his way, but he had no chance with me. How mercilessly I treated his church! — he pushed me to it, — what an *exposé* did I make of the Pope and his government, with all their extortions and cruelties!

how ruthlessly I showed them up as the sworn enemies of all freedom and enlightenment! The priest never got angry. He was too cunning for that, and he even laughed at some of my anecdotes, of which I related a great many.

"Don't be so hard on him, Potts," whispered my Lord, as the day wore on; "he's not one of us, you know!"

This speech put me into a flutter of delight. It was not alone that he called me Potts, but there was also an acceptance of me as one of his own set. We were, in fact, henceforth *nous autres*. Enchanting recognition, never to be forgotten!

"But what would you do with us?" said Dyke, mildly remonstrating against some severe measures we of the landed interest might be yet driven to resort to.

"I don't know, — that is to say, — I have not made up my mind whether it were better to make a clearance of you altogether, or to bribe you."

"Bribe us by all means, then!" said he, with a most serious earnestness.

"Ah! but could we rely upon you?" I asked.

"That would greatly depend upon the price."

"I'll not haggle about terms, nor I'm sure would Keldrum," said I, nodding over to his Lordship.

"You are only just to me, in that," said he, smiling.

"That's all fine talking for you fellows who had the luck to be first on the list, but what are poor devils like Oxley and myself to do?" said Hammond. "Taxation comes down to second sons."

"And the 'Times' says that's all right," added Oxley.

"And I say it's all wrong; and I say more," I broke in: "I say that of all the tyrannies of Europe, I know of none like that newspaper. Why, sir, whose station, I would ask, nowadays, can exempt him from its impertinent criticisms? Can Keldrum say — can I say — that to-morrow or next day we shall not be arraigned for this, that, or t'other? I choose, for instance, to manage my estate, — the property that has been in my family for centuries, — the acres that have descended to us by grants as old as Magna Charta. I desire, for reasons that seem sufficient to myself, to convert arable into grass land. I say to one of my tenant farmers

— it's Hedgeworth — no matter, I shall not mention names, but I say to him — ”

“ I know the man,” broke in the priest; “ you mean Hedgeworth Davis, of Mount Davis.”

“ No, sir, I do not,” said I, angrily, for I resented this attempt to run me to earth.

“ Hedgeworth! Hedgeworth! It ain't that fellow that was in the Rifles; the 2d battalion, is it?” said Oxley.

“ I repeat,” said I, “ that I will mention no names.”

“ My mother had some relatives Hedgeworths, they were from Herefordshire. How odd, Potts, if we should turn out to be connections! You said that these people were related to you.”

“ I hope,” I said angrily, “ that I am not bound to give the birth, parentage, and education of every man whose name I may mention in conversation. At least, I would protest that I have not prepared myself for such a demand upon my memory.”

“ Of course not, Potts. It would be a test no man could submit to,” said his Lordship.

“ That Hedgeworth, who was in the Rifles, exceeded all the fellows I ever met in drawing the long bow. There was no country he had not been in, no army he had not served with; he was related to every celebrated man in Europe; and, after all, it turned out that his father was an attorney at Market Harborough, and sub-agent to one of our fellows who had some property there.” This was said by Hammond, who directed the speech entirely to me.

“ Confound the Hedgeworths, all together,” Oxley broke in. “ They have carried us miles away from what we were talking of.”

This was a sentiment that met my heartiest concurrence, and I nodded in friendly recognition to the speaker, and drank off my glass to his health.

“ Who can give us a song? I'll back his reverence here to be a vocalist,” cried Hammond. And sure enough, Dyke sang one of the national melodies with great feeling and taste. Oxley followed with something in less perfect taste, and we all grew very jolly. Then there came a broiled bone and some devilled kidneys, and a warm brew which Ham-

mond himself concocted, — a most insidious liquor, which had a strong odor of lemons, and was compounded, at the same time, of little else than rum and sugar.

There is an adage that says "in vino veritas," which I shrewdly suspect to be a great fallacy; at least, as regards my own case, I know it to be totally inapplicable. I am in my sober hours — and I am proud to say that the exceptions from such are of the rarest — one of the most veracious of mortals; indeed, in my frank sincerity, I have often given offence to those who like a courteous hypocrisy better than an ungraceful truth. Whenever by any chance it has been my ill-fortune to transgress these limits, there is no bound to my imagination. There is nothing too extravagant or too vainglorious for me to say of myself. All the strange incidents of romance that I have read, all the travellers' stories, newspaper accidents, adventures by sea and land, wonderful coincidences, unexpected turns of fortune, I adapt to myself, and coolly relate them as personal experiences. Listeners have afterwards told me that I possess an amount of consistence, a verisimilitude in these narratives perfectly marvellous, and only to be accounted for by supposing that I myself must, for the time being, be the dupe of my own imagination. Indeed, I am sure such must be the true explanation of this curious fact. How, in any other mode, explain the rash wagers, absurd and impossible engagements I have contracted in such moments, backing myself to leap twenty-three feet on the level sward; to dive in six fathoms water, and fetch up Heaven knows what of shells and marine curiosities from the bottom; to ride the most unmanageable of horses; and, single-handed and unarmed, to fight the fiercest bulldog in England? Then, as to intellectual feats, what have I not engaged to perform? Sums of mental arithmetic; whole newspapers committed to memory after one reading; verse compositions, on any theme, in ten languages; and once a written contract to compose a whole opera, with all the scores, within twenty-four hours. To a nature thus strangely constituted, wine was a perfect magic wand, transforming a poor, weak, distrustful modest man into a hero; and yet, even with such temptations, my excesses were extremely rare and unfrequent. Are there many,

I would ask, that could resist the passport to such a dream-land, with only the penalty of a headache the next morning? Some one would, perhaps, suggest that these were enjoyments to pay forfeit on. Well, so they were; but I must not anticipate. And now to my tale.

To Hammond's brew there succeeded one by Oxley, made after an American receipt, and certainly both fragrant and insinuating; and then came a concoction made by the priest, which he called "Father Hosey's pride." It was made in a bowl, and drunk out of lemon-rinds, ingeniously fitted into the wine-glasses. I remember no other particulars about it, though I can call to mind much of the conversation that preceded it. How I gave a long historical account of my family, that we came originally from Corsica, the name Potts being a corruption of Pozzo, and that we were of the same stock as the celebrated diplomatist Pozzo di Borgo. Our unclaimed estates in the island were of fabulous value, but in asserting my right to them I should accept thirteen mortal duels, the arrears of a hundred and odd years unscored off, in anticipation of which I had at one time taken lessons from Angelo, in fencing, which led to the celebrated challenge they might have read in "Galignani," where I offered to meet any swordsman in Europe for ten thousand Napoleons, giving choice of the weapon to my adversary. With a tear to the memory of the poor French colonel that I killed at Sedan, I turned the conversation. Being in France, I incidentally mentioned some anecdotes of military life, and how I had invented the rifle called after Minié's name, and, in a moment of good nature, given that excellent fellow my secret.

"I will say," said I, "that Minié has shown more gratitude than some others nearer home, but we'll talk of rifled cannon another time."

In an episode about bear-shooting, I mentioned the Emperor of Russia, poor dear Nicholas, and told how we had once exchanged horses, — mine being more strong-boned, and a weight-carrier; his a light Caucasian mare, of purest breed, "the dam of that creature you may see below in the stable now," said I, carelessly. "'Come and see me one of these days, Potts,' said he, in parting; 'come and pass a week

with me at Constantinople.' This was the first intimation he had ever given of his project against Turkey; and when I told it to the Duke of Wellington, his remark was a muttered 'Strange fellow, Potts, — knows everything!' though he made no reply to me at the time."

It was somewhere about this period that the priest began with what struck me as an attempt to outdo me as a storyteller, an effort I should have treated with the most contemptuous indifference but for the amount of attention bestowed on him by the others. Nor was this all, but actually I perceived that a kind of rivalry was attempted to be established, so that we were pitted directly against each other. Amongst the other self-delusions of such moments was the profound conviction I entertained that I was master of all games of skill and address, superior to Major A. at whist, and able to give Staunton a pawn and the move at chess. The priest was just as vainglorious. "He'd like to see the man who'd play him a game of 'spoiled five' — whatever that was — "or drafts; ay, or, though it was not his pride, a bit of backgammon."

"Done, for fifty pounds; double on the gammon!" cried I.

"Fifty fiddlesticks!" cried he; "where would you or I find as many shillings?"

"What do you mean, sir?" said I, angrily. "Am I to suppose that you doubt my competence to risk such a contemptible sum, or is it to your own inability alone you would testify?"

A very acrimonious dispute followed, of which I have no clear recollection. I only remember how Hammond was out-and-out for the priest, and Oxley too tipsy to take *my* part with any efficiency. At last — how arranged I can't say — peace was restored, and the next thing I can recall was listening to Father Dyke giving a long, and of course a most fabulous, history of a ring that he wore on his second finger. It was given by the Pretender, he said, to his uncle, the celebrated Carmelite monk, Lawrence O'Kelly, who for years had followed the young prince's fortunes. It was an onyx, with the letters C. E. S. engraved on it. Keldrum took an immense fancy to it; he protested that everything

that attached to that unhappy family possessed in his eyes an uncommon interest. "If you have a fancy to take up Potts's wager," said he, laughingly, "I'll give you fifty pounds for your signet ring."

The priest demurred; Hammond interposed; then there was more discussion, now warm, now jocose. Oxley tried to suggest something, which we all laughed at. Keldrum placed the backgammon board meanwhile; but I can give no clear account of what ensued, though I remember that the terms of our wager were committed to writing by Hammond, and signed by Father D. and myself, and in the conditions there figured a certain ring, guaranteed to have belonged to and been worn by his Royal Highness Charles Edward, and a cream-colored horse, equally guaranteed as the produce of a Caucasian mare presented by the late Emperor Nicholas to the present owner. The document was witnessed by all three, Oxley's name written in two letters, and a flourish.

After that, I played, and lost!

CHAPTER IV.

PLEASANT REFLECTIONS ON AWAKING.

I CAN recall to this very hour the sensations of headache and misery with which I awoke the morning after this debauch. Racking pain it was, with a sort of tremulous beating all through the brain, as though a small engine had been set to work there, and that piston and boiler and connecting-rod were all banging, fizzing, and vibrating amid my fevered senses. I was, besides, much puzzled to know where I was, and how I had come there. Controversial divinity, genealogy, horse-racing, the peerage, and "double sixes" were dancing a wild cotillon through my brain; and although a waiter more than once cautiously obtruded his head into the room, to see if I were asleep, and as guardedly withdrew it again, I never had energy to speak to him, but lay passive and still, waiting till my mind might clear, and the cloud-fog that obscured my faculties might be wafted away.

At last—it was towards evening—the man, possibly becoming alarmed at my protracted lethargy, moved somewhat briskly through the room, and with that amount of noise that showed he meant to arouse me, disturbed chairs and fire-irons indiscriminately.

"Is it late or early?" asked I, faintly.

"'Tis near five, sir, and a beautiful evening," said he, drawing nigh, with the air of one disposed for colloquy.

I did n't exactly like to ask where I was, and tried to ascertain the fact by a little circumlocution. "I suppose," said I, yawning, "for all that is to be done in a place like this, when up, one might just as well stay abed, eh?"

"'Tis the snuggest place, anyhow," said he, with that peculiar disposition to agree with you so characteristic in an Irish waiter.

"No society?" sighed I.

"No, indeed, sir."

"No theatre?"

"Devil a one, sir."

"No sport?"

"Yesterday was the last of the season, sir; and signs on it, his Lordship and the other gentleman was off immediately after breakfast."

"You mean Lord — Lord —" A mist was clearing slowly away, but I could not yet see clearly.

"Lord Keldrum, sir; a real gentleman every inch of him."

"Oh! yes, to be sure, — a very old friend of mine," muttered I. "And so he's gone, is he?"

"Yes, sir; and the last word he said was about your honor."

"About me, — what was it?"

"Well, indeed, sir," replied the waiter, with a hesitating and confused manner, "I did n't rightly understand it; but as well as I could catch the words, it was something about hoping your honor had more of that wonderful breed of horses the Emperor of Roosia gave you."

"Oh, yes! I understand," said I, stopping him abruptly. "By the way, how is Blondel — that is, my horse — this morning?"

"Well, he looked fresh and hearty, when he went off this morning at daybreak —"

"What do you mean?" cried I, jumping up in my bed. "Went off? where to?"

"With Father Dyke on his back; and a neater hand he could n't wish over him. 'Tim,' says he, to the ostler, as he mounted, 'there's a five-shilling piece for you, for hansom, for I won this baste last night, and you must drink my health and wish me luck with him.'"

I heard no more, but, sinking back into the bed, I covered my face with my hands, overcome with shame and misery. All the mists that had blurred my faculties had now been swept clean away, and the whole history of the previous evening was revealed before me. My stupid folly, my absurd boastfulness, my egregious story-telling, — not to call

it worse, — were all there ; but, shall I acknowledge it? what pained me not less poignantly was the fact that I ventured to stake the horse I had merely hired, and actually lost him at the play-table.

As soon as I rallied from this state of self-accusation, I set to work to think how I should manage to repossess myself of my beast, my loss of which might be converted into a felony. To follow the priest and ransom Blondel was my first care. Father Dyke would most probably not exact an unreasonable price; he, of course, never believed one word of my nonsensical narrative about Schamyl and the Caucasus, and he'd not revenge upon Potts sober the follies of Potts tipsy. It is true my purse was a very slender one, but Blondel, to any one unacquainted with his pedigree, could not be a costly animal; fifteen pounds — twenty, certainly — ought to buy what the priest would call "every hair on his tail."

It was now too late in the evening to proceed to execute the measures I had resolved on, and so I determined to lie still and ponder over them. Dismissing the waiter, with an order to bring me a cup of tea about eight o'clock, I resumed my cogitations. They were not pleasant ones: Potts a by-word for the most outrageous and incoherent balderdash and untruth; Potts in the "Hue and Cry;" Potts in the dock; Potts in the pillory; Potts paragraphed in "Punch;" portrait of Potts, price one penny! — these were only a few of the forms in which the descendant of the famous Corsican family of Pozzo di Borgo now presented himself to my imagination.

The courts and quadrangles of Old Trinity ringing with laughter, the coarse exaggerations of tasteless scoffers, the jokes and sneers of stupidity, malice, and all uncharitableness, rang in my ears as if I heard them. All possible and impossible versions of the incident passed in review before me: my father, driven distracted by impertinent inquiries, cutting me off with a shilling, and then dying of mortification and chagrin; rewards offered for my apprehension; descriptions, not in any way flatteries, of my personal appearance; paragraphs of local papers hinting that the notorious Potts was supposed to have been seen in our

neighborhood yesterday, with sly suggestions about looking after stable-doors, &c. I could bear it no longer. I jumped up, and rang the bell violently.

"You know this Father Dyke, waiter? In what part of the country does he live?"

"He's parish priest of Inistioge," said he; "the snugest place in the whole county."

"How far from this may it be?"

"It's a matter of five-and-forty miles; and by the same token, he said he'd not draw bridle till he got home to-night, for there was a fair at Grague to-morrow, and if he was n't pleased with the baste he'd sell him there."

I groaned deeply; for here was a new complication, entirely unlooked for. "You can't possibly mean," gasped I out, "that a respectable clergyman would expose for sale a horse lent to him casually by a friend?" for the thought struck me that this protest of mine should be thus early on record.

The waiter scratched his head and looked confused. Whether another version of the event possessed him, or that my question staggered his convictions, I am unable to say; but he made no reply. "It is true," continued I, in the same strain, "that I met his reverence last night for the first time. My friend Lord Keldrum made us acquainted; but seeing him received at my noble friend's board, I naturally felt, and said to myself, 'The man Keldrum admits to his table is the equal of any one.' Could anything be more reasonable than that?"

"No, indeed, sir; nothing," said the waiter, obsequiously.

"Well, then," resumed I, "some day or other it may chance that you will be called on to remember and recall this conversation between us; if so, it will be important that you should have a clear and distinct memory of the fact that when I awoke in the morning, and asked for my horse, the answer you made me was — What was the answer you made me?"

"The answer I med was this," said the fellow, sturdily, and with an effrontery I can never forget, — "the answer I med was, that the man that won him took him away."

"You're an insolent scoundrel," cried I, boiling over with passion, "and if you don't ask pardon for this outrage

on your knees, I'll include you in the indictment for conspiracy."

So far from proceeding to the penitential act I proposed, the fellow grinned from ear to ear, and left the room. It was a long time before I could recover my wonted calm and composure. That this rascal's evidence would be fatal to me if the question ever came to trial, was as clear as noon-day; not less clear was it that he knew this himself.

"I must go back at once to town," thought I. "I will surrender myself to the law. If a compromise be impossible, I will perish at the stake."

I forgot there was no stake; but there was wool-carding, and oakum-picking, and wheel-treading, and oyster-shell pounding, and other small plays of this nature, infinitely more degrading to humanity than all the cruelties of our barbarous ancestors.

Now, in no record of lives of adventure had I met any account of such trials as these. The Silvio Pellicos of Pentonville are yet unwritten martyrs. Prison discipline would vulgarize the grandest epic that ever was conceived "Anything rather than this," said I, aloud. "Proscribed, outlawed, hunted down, but never, gray-coated and hair-clipped, shall a Potts be sentenced to the 'crank,' or black-holed as refractory! — Bring me my bill," cried I, in a voice of indignant anger. "I will go forth into the world of darkness and tempest; I will meet the storm and the hurricane; better all the conflict of the elements than man's — than man's —" I was n't exactly sure what; but there was no need of the word, for a gust of wind had just flattened my umbrella in my face as I issued forth, and left me breathless, as the door closed behind me.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROSARY AT INISTIOGE.

As I walked onward against the swooping wind and the plashing rain, I felt a sort of heroic ardor in the notion of breasting the adverse waves of life so boldly. It is not every fellow could do this,—throw his knapsack on his shoulder, seize his stick, and set out in storm and blackness. No, Potts, my man; for downright inflexibility of purpose, for bold and resolute action, you need yield to none! It was, indeed, an awful night; the thunder rolled and crashed with scarce an interval of cessation; forked lightning tore across the sky in every direction; while the wind swept through the deep glen, smashing branches and uplifting large trees like mere shrubs. I was soon completely drenched, and my soaked clothes hung around with the weight of lead; my spirits, however, sustained me, and I toiled along, occasionally in a sort of wild bravado, giving a cheer as the thunder rolled close above my head, and trying to sing, as though my heart were as gay and my spirits as light as in an hour of happiest abandonment.

Jean Paul has somewhere the theory that our Good Genius is attached to us from our birth by a film fine as gossamer, and which few of us escape rupturing in the first years of youth, thus throwing ourselves at once without chart or pilot upon the broad ocean of life. He, however, more happily constituted, who feels the guidance of his guardian spirit, recognizes the benefits of its care, and the admonitions of its wisdom,—*he* is destined to great things. Such men discover new worlds beyond the seas, carry conquest over millions, found dynasties, and build up empires; they whom the world regard as demigods having simply the wisdom of being led by fortune, and not severing the slender

thread that unites them to their destiny. Was I, Potts, in this glorious category? Had the lesson of the great moralist been such a warning to me that I had preserved the filmy link unbroken? I really began to think so; a certain impulse, a whispering voice within, that said, "Go on!" On, ever onward! seemed to be the accents of that Fate which had great things in store for me, and would eventually make me illustrious.

No illusions of your own, Potts, no phantasmagoria of your own poor heated fancy, must wile you away from the great and noble part destined for you. No weakness, no faint-heartedness, no shrinking from toil, nor even peril. Work hard to know thoroughly for what Fate intends you; read your credentials well, and then go to your post unflinchingly. Revolving this theory of mine, I walked ever on. It opened a wide field, and my imagination disported in it, as might a wild mustang over some vast prairie. The more I thought over it, the more did it seem to me the real embodiment of that superstition which extends to every land and every family of men. We are Lucky when, submitting to our Good Genius, we suffer ourselves to be led along unhesitatingly; we are Unlucky when, breaking our frail bonds, we encounter life unguided and unaided.

What a docile, obedient, and believing pupil did I pledge myself to be! Fate should see that she had no refractory nor rebellious spirit in me, no self-indulgent voluptuary, seeking only the sunny side of existence, but a nature ready to confront the rugged conflict of life, and to meet its hardships, if such were my allotted path.

I applied the circumstances in which I then found myself to my theory, and met no difficulty in the adaptation. Blondel was to perform a great part in my future. Blondel was a symbol selected by fate to indicate a certain direction. Blondel was a lamp by which I could find my way in the dark paths of the world. With Blondel, my Good Genius would walk beside me, or occasionally get up on the crupper, but never leave me or desert me. In the high excitement of my mind, I felt no sense of bodily fatigue, but walked on, drenched to the skin, alternately shivering with cold or burning with all the intensity of fever. In this state was it that

I entered the little inn of Ovoco soon after daybreak, and stood dripping in the bar, a sad spectacle of exhaustion and excitement. My first question was, "Has Blondel been here?" and before they could reply, I went on with all the rapidity of delirium to assure them that deception of me would be fruitless; that Fate and I understood each other thoroughly, travelled together on the best of terms, never disagreed about anything, but, by a mutual system of give and take, hit it off like brothers. I talked for an hour in this strain; and then my poor faculties, long struggling and sore pushed, gave way completely, and I fell into brain fever.

I chanced upon kind and good-hearted folk, who nursed me with care and watched me with interest; but my illness was a severe one, and it was only in the sixth week that I could be about again, a poor, weak, emaciated creature, with failing limbs and shattered nerves. There is an indescribable sense of weariness in the mind after fever, just as if the brain had been enormously over-taxed and exerted, and that in the pursuit of all the wild and fleeting fancies of delirium it had travelled over miles and miles of space. To the depressing influence of this sensation is added the difficulty of disentangling the capricious illusions of the sick-bed from the actual facts of life; and in this maze of confusion my first days of convalescence were passed. Blondel was my great puzzle. Was he a reality, or a mere creature of imagination? Had I really ridden him as a horse, or only as an idea? Was he a quadruped with mane and tail, or an allegory invented to typify destiny? I cannot say what hours of painful brain labor this inquiry cost me, and what intense research into myself. Strange enough, too, though I came out of the investigation convinced of his existence, I arrived at the conclusion that he was a "horse and something more." Not that I am able to explain myself more fully on that head, though, if I were writing this portion of my memoirs in German, I suspect I could convey enough of my meaning to give a bad headache to any one indulgent enough to follow me.

I set out once more upon my pilgrimage on a fine day of June, my steps directed to the village of Inistioge, where

Father Dyke resided. I was too weak for much exertion, and it was only after five days of the road I reached at nightfall the little glen in which the village stood. The moon was up, streaking the wide market-places with long lines of yellow light between the rows of tall elm-trees, and tipping with silvery sheen the bright eddies of the beautiful river that rolled beside it. Over the granite cliffs that margined the stream, laurel, and arbutus, and wild holly clustered in wild luxuriance, backed higher up again, by tall pine-trees, whose leafy summits stood out against the sky; and lastly, deep within a waving meadow, stood an old ruined abbey, whose traceried window was now softly touched by the moonlight. All was still and silent, except the rush of the rapid river, as I sat down upon a stone bench to enjoy the scene and luxuriate in its tranquil serenity. I had not believed Ireland contained such a spot, for there was all the trim neatness and careful propriety of an English village, with that luxuriance of verdure and wild beauty so eminently Irish. How was it that I had never heard of it before? Were others aware of it, or was the discovery strictly my own? Or can it possibly be that all this picturesque loveliness is but the effect of a mellow moon? While I thus questioned myself, I heard the sound of a quick foot-step rapidly approaching, and soon afterwards the pleasant tone of a rich voice humming an opera air. I arose, and saw a tall, athletic-looking figure, with rod and fishing-basket, approaching me.

"May I ask you, sir," said I, addressing him, "if this village contains an inn?"

"There is, or rather there was, a sort of inn here," said he, removing his cigar as he spoke; "but the place is so little visited that I fancy the landlord found it would not answer, and so it is closed at this moment."

"But do visitors — tourists — never pass this way?"

"Yes, and a few salmon-fishers, like myself, come occasionally in the season; but then we dispose ourselves in little lodgings, here and there, some of us with the farmers, one or two of us with the priest."

"Father Dyke?" broke I in.

"Yes; you know him, perhaps?"

"I have heard of him, and met him, indeed," added I, after a pause. "Where may his house be?"

"The prettiest spot in the whole glen. If you'd like to see it in this picturesque moonlight, come along with me."

I accepted the invitation at once, and we walked on together. The easy, half-careless tone of the stranger, the loose, lounging stride of his walk, and a certain something in his mellow voice, seemed to indicate one of those natures which, so to say, take the world well, — temperaments that reveal themselves almost immediately. He talked away about fishing as he went, and appeared to take a deep interest in the sport, not heeding much the ignorance I betrayed on the subject, nor my ignoble confession that I had never adventured upon anything higher than a worm and a quill.

"I'm sure," said he, laughingly, "Tom Dyke never encouraged you in such sporting-tackle, glorious fly-fisher as he is."

"You forget, perhaps," replied I, "that I scarcely have any acquaintance with him. We met once only at a dinner-party."

"He's a pleasant fellow," resumed he; "devilish wide-awake, one must say; up to most things in this same world of ours."

"That much my own brief experience of him can confirm," said I, dryly, for the remark rather jarred upon my feelings.

"Yes," said he, as though following out his own train of thought. "Old Tom is not a bird to be snared with coarse lines. The man must be an early riser that catches him napping."

I cannot describe how this irritated me. It sounded like so much direct sarcasm upon my weakness and want of acuteness.

"There's the 'Rosary;' that's his cottage," said he, taking my arm, while he pointed upward to a little jutting promontory of rock over the river, surmounted by a little thatched cottage almost embowered in roses and honey-suckles. So completely did it occupy the narrow limits of ground, that the windows projected actually over the stream, and the creeping plants that twined through the little balconies hung in tangled masses over the water. "Search

where you will through the Scottish and Cumberland scenery, I defy you to match that," said my companion; "not to say that you can hook a four-pound fish from that little balcony on any summer evening while you smoke your cigar."

"It is a lovely spot, indeed," said I, inhaling with ecstasy the delicious perfume which in the calm night air seemed to linger in the atmosphere.

"He tells me," continued my companion, — "and I take his word for it, for I am no florist, — that there are seventy varieties of the rose on and around that cottage. I can answer for it that you can't open a window without a great mass of flowers coming in showers over you. I told him, frankly, that if I were his tenant for longer than the fishing-season, I'd clear half of them away."

"You live there, then?" asked I, timidly.

"Yes, I rent the cottage, all but two rooms, which he wished to keep for himself, but which he now writes me word may be let, for this month and the next, if a tenant offer. Would you like them?" asked he, abruptly.

"Of all things — that is — I think so — I should like to see them first!" muttered I, half startled by the suddenness of the question.

"Nothing easier," said he, opening a little wicket as he spoke, and beginning to ascend a flight of narrow steps cut in the solid rock. "This is a path of my designing," continued he; "the regular approach is on the other side; but this saves fully half a mile of road, though it be a little steep."

As I followed him up the ascent, I proposed to myself a variety of questions, such as, where and how I was to procure accommodation for the night, and in what manner to obtain something to eat, of which I stood much in need? and I had gained a little flower-garden at the rear of the cottage before I had resolved any of these difficult points.

"Here we are," said he, drawing a long breath. "You can't see much of the view at this hour; but to-morrow, when you stand on this spot, and look down that reach of the river, with Mont Alto in the background, you'll tell me if you know anything finer!"

"Is that Edward?" cried a soft voice; and at the same instant a young girl came hastily out of the cottage, and, throwing her arms around my companion, exclaimed, "How you have alarmed me! What could possibly have kept you out so late?"

"A broad-shouldered fish, a fellow weighing twelve pounds at the very least, and who, after nigh three hours' playing, got among the rocks and smashed my tackle."

"And you lost him?"

"That did I, and some twenty yards of gut, and the top splice of my best rod, and my temper, besides. But I'm forgetting; Mary, here is a gentleman who will, I hope, not refuse to join us at supper. — My sister."

By the manner of presentation, it was clear that he expected to hear my name, and so I interposed, "Mr. Potts, — Algernon Sydney Potts."

The young lady courtesied slightly, muttered something like a repetition of the invitation, and led the way into the cottage.

My astonishment was great at the "interior" now before me; for though all the arrangements bespoke habits of comfort and even luxury, there was a studious observance of cottage style in everything; the bookshelves, the tables, the very pianoforte, being all made of white unvarnished wood. And I now perceived that the young lady herself, with a charming coquetry, had assumed something of the costume of the Oberland, and wore her bodice laced in front, and covered with silver embroidery both tasteful and becoming.

"My name is Crofton," said my host, as he disengaged himself of his basket and tackle; "we are almost as much strangers here as yourself. I came here for the fishing, and mean to take myself off when it's over."

"I hope not, Edward," broke in the girl, who was now, with the assistance of a servant-woman, preparing the table for supper; "I hope you'll stay till we see the autumn tints on those trees."

"My sister is just as great an enthusiast about sketching as I am for salmon-fishing," said he, laughingly; "and for my own part, I like scenery and landscape very well, but

think them marvellously heightened by something like sport. Are you an angler?"

"No," said I; "I know nothing of the gentle craft."

"Fond of shooting, perhaps? Some men think the two sports incompatible."

"I am as inexperienced with the gun as the rod," said I, diffidently.

I perceived that the sister gave a sly look under her long eyelashes towards me; but what its meaning, I could not well discover. Was it depreciation of a man who avowed himself unacquainted with the sports of the field, or was it a quiet recognition of claims more worthy of regard? At all events, I perceived that she had very soft, gentle-looking gray eyes, a very fair skin, and a profusion of beautiful brown hair. I had not thought her pretty at first. I now saw that she was extremely pretty, and her figure, though slightly given to fulness, the perfection of grace.

Hungry, almost famished as I was, with a fast of twelve hours, I felt no impatience so long as she moved about in preparation for the meal. How she disposed the little table equipage, the careful solicitude with which she arranged the fruit and the flowers,—not always satisfied with her first dispositions, but changing them for something different,—all interested me vastly, and when at last we were summoned to table, I actually felt sorry and disappointed.

Was it really so delicious, was the cookery so exquisite? I own frankly that I am not a trustworthy witness; but if my oath could be taken, I am willing to swear that I believe there never were such salmon-steaks, such a pigeon-pie, and such a damson-tart served to mortals as these. My enthusiasm, I suspect, must have betrayed itself in some outward manifestation, for I remember Crofton laughingly having remarked, —

"You will turn my sister's head, Mr. Potts, by such flatteries; all the more, since her cookery is self-taught."

"Don't believe him, Mr. Potts; I have studied all the great masters of the art, and you shall have an omelette to-morrow for breakfast, Brillat Savarin himself would not despise."

I blushed at the offer of an hospitality so neatly and deli-

cately insinuated, and had really no words to acknowledge it, nor was my confusion unfavorably judged by my hosts. Crofton marked it quickly, and said, —

"Yes, Mr. Potts, and I'll teach you to hook a trout afterwards. Meanwhile let us have a glass of Sauterne together; we drink it out of green glasses, to cheat ourselves into the fancy that it's Rhenish."

"'Am Rhein, am Rhein, da wachsen unsere Reben,'" said I, quoting the students' song.

"Oh, have you been in Germany?" cried she, eagerly.

"Alas! no," said I. "I have never travelled." I thought she looked disappointed as I said this. Indeed, I already wished it unsaid; but her brother broke in with, —

"We are regular vagabonds, Mr. Potts. My sister and myself have had a restless paroxysm for the last three years of life; and what with seeking cool spots for the summer and hot climates for winter, we are scarcely ever off the road."

"Like the gentleman, I suppose, who ate oysters for appetite, but carried his system so far as to induce indigestion." My joke failed; nobody laughed, and I was overwhelmed with confusion, which I was fain to bury in my strawberries and cream.

"Let us have a little music, Mary," said Crofton. "Do you play or sing, Mr. Potts?"

"Neither. I do nothing," cried I, in despair. "As Sydney Smith says, 'I know something about the Romans,' but, for any gift or grace which could adorn society, or make time pass more pleasantly, I am an utter bankrupt."

The young girl had, while I was speaking, taken her place at the pianoforte, and was half listlessly suffering her hands to fall in chords over the instrument.

"Come out upon this terrace, here," cried Crofton to me, "and we'll have our cigar. What I call a regular luxury after a hard day is to lounge out here in the cool night air, and enjoy one's weed while listening to Spohr or Beethoven."

It was really delightful. The bright stars were all reflected in the calm river down below, and a thousand odors floated softly on the air as we sat there.

Are there not in every man's experience short periods in

which he seemed to have lived longer than during whole years of life? They tell us there are certain conditions of the atmosphere, inappreciable as to the qualities, which seem to ripen wines, imparting to young fresh vintages all the mellow richness of age, all the depth of flavor, all the velvety softness of time. May there not possibly be influences which similarly affect our natures? May there not be seasons in which changes as great as these are wrought within us? I firmly believe it, and as firmly that such a period was that in which I sat on the balcony over the Nore, listening to Mary Crofton as she sang, but just as often lost to every sound, and deep in a heaven of blended enjoyments, of which no one ingredient was in the ascendant. Starry sky, rippling river, murmuring night winds, perfumed air, floating music, all mingling as do the odors of an incense, and, like an incense, filling the brain with a delicious intoxication.

Hour after hour must have passed with me in this half-conscious ecstasy, for Crofton at last said, —

“There, where you see that pinkish tint through the gray, that’s the sign of breaking day, and the signal for bedtime. Shall I show you your room?”

“How I wish this could last forever!” cried I, rapturously; and then, half ashamed of my warmth, I stammered out a good-night, and retired.

CHAPTER VI.

MY SELF-EXAMINATION.

OUR life at the Rosary — for it was *our* life now of which I have to speak — was one of unbroken enjoyment. On fine days we fished; that is, Crofton did, and I loitered along some river's bank till I found a quiet spot to plant my rod, and stretch myself on the grass, now reading, oftener dreaming, such glorious dreams as only come in the leafy shading of summer time, to a mind enraptured with all around it. The lovely scenery and the perfect solitude of the spot ministered well to my fanciful mood, and left me free to weave the most glittering web of incident for my future. So utterly was all the past blotted from my memory that I recalled nothing of existence more remote than my first evening at the cottage. If for a parting instant a thought of by-gones would obtrude, I hastened to escape from it as from a gloomy reminiscence. I turned away as would a dreamer who dreaded to awaken out of some delicious vision, and who would not face the dull aspect of reality. Three weeks thus glided by of such happiness as I can scarcely yet recall without emotion! The Croftons had come to treat me like a brother; they spoke of family events in all freedom before me; talked of the most confidential things in my presence, and discussed their future plans and their means as freely in my hearing as though I had been kith and kin with them. I learned that they were orphans, educated and brought up by a rich, eccentric uncle, who lived in a sort of costly reclusion in one of the Cumberland dales; Edward, who had served in the army, and been wounded in an Indian campaign, had given up the service in a fit of impatience of being passed over in promotion.

His uncle resented the rash step by withdrawing the liberal allowance he had usually made him, and they quarrelled. Mary Crofton, espousing her brother's side, quitted her guardian's roof to join his; and thus had they rambled about the world for two or three years, on means scanty enough, but still sufficient to provide for those who neither sought to enter society nor partake of its pleasures.

As I advanced in the intimacy, I became depository of the secrets of each. Edward's was the sorrow he felt for having involved his sister in his own ruin, and been the means of separating her from one so well able and so willing to befriend her. Hers was the more bitter thought that their narrow means should prejudice her brother's chances of recovery, for his chest had shown symptoms of dangerous disease requiring all that climate and consummate care might do to overcome. Preyed on incessantly by this reflection, unable to banish it, equally unable to resist its force, she took the first and only step she had ever adventured without his knowledge, and had written to her uncle a long letter of explanations and entreaty.

I saw the letter, and read it carefully. It was all that sisterly love and affection could dictate, accompanied by a sense of dignity, that if her appeal should be unsuccessful, no slight should be passed upon her brother, who was unaware of the step thus taken. To express this sufficiently, she was driven to the acknowledgment that Edward would never have himself stooped to the appeal; and so careful was she of his honor in this respect, that she repeated — with what appeared to me unnecessary insistence — that the request should be regarded as hers, and hers only. In fact, this was the uppermost sentiment in the whole epistle. I ventured to say as much, and endeavored to induce her to moderate in some degree the amount of this pretension; but she resisted firmly and decidedly. Now, I have recorded this circumstance here, — less for itself than to mention how by its means this little controversy led to a great intimacy between us, — inducing us, while defending our separate views, to discuss each other's motives, and even characters, with the widest freedom. I called her enthusiast, and in return she styled me worldly and calculating; and, indeed,

I tried to seem so, and fortified my opinions by prudential maxims and severe reflections I should have been sorely indisposed to adopt in my own case. I believe she saw all this. I am sure she read me aright, and perceived that I was arguing against my own convictions. At all events, day after day went over, and no answer came to the letter. I used to go each morning to the post in the village to inquire, but always returned with the same disheartening tidings, "Nothing to-day!"

One of these mornings it was, that I was returning disconsolately from the village, Crofton, whom I believed at the time miles away on the mountains, overtook me. He came up from behind, and, passing his arm within mine, walked on some minutes without speaking. I saw plainly there was something on his mind, and I half dreaded lest he might have discovered his sister's secret and have disapproved of my share in it.

"Algy," said he, calling me by my Christian name, which he very rarely did, "I have something to say to you. Can I be quite certain that you'll take my frankness in good part?"

"You can," I said, with a great effort to seem calm and assured.

"You give me your word upon it?"

"I do," said I, trying to appear bold; "and my hand be witness of it."

"Well," he resumed, drawing a long breath, "here it is. I have remarked that for above a week back you have never waited for the postboy's return to the cottage, but always have come down to the village yourself."

I nodded assent, but said nothing.

"I have remarked, besides," said he, "that when told at the office there was no letter for you, you came away sad-looking and fretted, scarcely spoke for some time, and seemed altogether downcast and depressed."

"I don't deny it," I said calmly.

"Well," continued he, "some old experiences of mine have taught me that this sort of anxiety has generally but one source, with fellows of *our* age, and which simply means that the remittance we have counted upon as certain has

been, from some cause or other, delayed. Is n't that the truth?"

"No," said I, joyfully, for I was greatly relieved by his words; "no, on my honor, nothing of the kind."

"I may not have hit the thing exactly," said he, hurriedly, "but I'll be sworn it is a money matter; and if a couple of hundred pounds be of the least service —"

"My dear, kind-hearted fellow," I broke in, "I can't endure this longer: it is no question of money; it is nothing that affects my means, though I half wish it were, to show you how cheerfully I could owe you my escape from a difficulty, — not, indeed, that I need another tie to bind me to you —" But I could say no more, for my eyes were swimming over, and my lips trembling.

"Then," cried he, "I have only to ask pardon for thus obtruding upon your confidence."

I was too full of emotion to do more than squeeze his hand affectionately, and thus we walked along, side by side, neither uttering a word. At last, and as it were with an effort, by a bold transition, to carry our thoughts into another and very different channel, he said: "Here's a letter from old Dyke, our landlord. The worthy father has been enjoying himself in a tour of English watering-places, and has now started for a few weeks up the Rhine. His account of his holiday, as he calls it, is amusing; nor less so is the financial accident to which he owes the excursion. Take it, and read it," he added, giving me the epistle. "If the style be the man, his reverence is not difficult to decipher."

I bestowed little attention on this speech, uttered, as I perceived, rather from the impulse of starting a new topic than anything else, and, taking the letter half mechanically, I thrust it in my pocket. One or two efforts we made at conversation were equally failures, and it was a relief to me when Crofton, suddenly remembering some night-lines he had laid in a mountain lake a few miles off, hastily shook my hand, and said, "Good-bye till dinner-time."

When I reached the cottage, instead of entering I strolled into the garden, and sought out a little summer-house of sweet-brier and honeysuckle, on the edge of the river. Some strange, vague impression was on me, that I needed

time and place to commune with myself and be alone; that a large unsettled account lay between me and my conscience, which could not be longer deferred; but of what nature, how originating, and how tending, I know nothing whatever.

I resolved to submit myself to a searching examination, to ascertain what I might about myself. In my favorite German authors I had frequently read that men's failures in life were chiefly owing to neglect of this habit of self-investigation; that though we calculate well the dangers and difficulties of an enterprise, we omit the more important estimate of what may be our capacity to effect an object, what are our resources, wherein our deficiencies.

"Now for it," I thought, as I entered the little arbor, — "now for it, Potts; kiss the book, and tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

As I said this, I took off my hat and bowed respectfully around to the members of an imaginary court. "My name," said I, in a clear and respectful voice, "is Algernon Sydney Potts. If I be pushed to the avowal, I am sorry it is Potts. Algernon Sydney do a deal, but they can't do everything, — not to say that captious folk see a certain bathos in the collocation with my surname. Can a man hope to make such a name illustrious? Can he aspire to the notion of a time when people will allude to the great Potts, the celebrated Potts, the immortal Potts?" I grew very red, I felt my cheek on fire as I uttered this, and I suddenly bethought me of Mr. Pitt, and I said aloud, "And, if Pitt, why not Potts?" That was a most healing recollection. I revelled in it for a long time. "How true is it," I continued, "that the halo of greatness illumines all within its circle, and the man is merged in the grandeur of his achievements. The men who start in life with high sounding designations have but to fill a foregone pledge, — to pay the bill that fortune has endorsed. Not so was our case, Pitt. To us is it to lay every foundation stone of our future greatness. There was nothing in *your* surname to foretell you would be a Minister of State at one-and-thirty, — there is no letter of *mine* to indicate what I shall be. But what is it that I am to be? Is it Poet, Philosopher, Politician, Soldier, or Discoverer? Am I to be great in Art, or illustrious in

Letters? Is there to be an ice tract of Behring's Straits called Potts's Point, or a planet styled Pottsium Sidus? And when centuries have rolled over, will historians have their difficulty about the first Potts, and what his opinions were on this subject or that?"

Then came a low soft sound of half-suppressed laughter, and then the rustle of a muslin dress hastily brushing through the trees. I rushed out from my retreat, and hurried down the walk. No one to be seen, — not a soul; not a sound, either, to be heard.

"No use hiding, Mary," I called out, "I saw you all the time; my mock confession was got up merely to amuse you. Come out boldly and laugh as long as you will." No answer. This refusal amazed me. It was like a disbelief in my assertion. "Come, come!" I cried, "you can't pretend to think I was serious in all this vainglorious nonsense. Come, Mary, and let us enjoy the laugh at it together. If you don't, I shall be angry. I'll take it ill, — very ill."

Still no reply. Could I, then, have been deceived? Was it a mere delusion? But no; I heard the low laugh, and the rustle of the dress, and the quick tread upon the gravel, too plainly for any mistake, and so I returned to the cottage in chagrin and ill-temper. As I passed the open windows of the little drawing-room I saw Mary seated at her work, with, as was her custom, an open book on a little table beside her. Absorbed as she was, she did not lift her head, nor notice my approach till I entered the room.

"You have no letter for me?" she cried, in a voice of sorrowful meaning.

"None," said I scrutinizing her closely, and sorely puzzled what to make of her calm deportment. "Have you been out in the garden this morning?" I asked, abruptly.

"No," said she, frankly.

"Not quitted the house at all?"

"No. Why do you ask?" cried she, in some surprise.

"I'll tell you," I said, sitting down at her side, and speaking in a low and confidential tone; "a strange thing has just happened to me." And with that I narrated the incident, glossing over, as best I might, the absurdity of my soliloquy-

ing, and the nature of the self-examination I was engaged in. Without waiting for me to finish, she broke in suddenly with a low laugh, and said, —

“It must have been Rose.”

“And who is Rose?” I asked half sternly.

“A cousin of ours, a mere school-girl, who has just arrived. She came by the mail this morning, when you were out. But here she is, coming up the walk. Just step behind that screen, and you shall have your revenge. I’ll make her tell everything.”

I had barely time to conceal myself, when, with a merry laugh, a fresh, girlish voice called out, “I’ve seen him! I have seen him, Mary! I was sitting on the rock beside the river, when he came into the summer-house, and, fancying himself alone and unseen, proceeded to make his confession to himself.”

“His confession! What do you mean?”

“I don’t exactly know whether that be the proper name for it, but it was a sort of self-examination, not very painful, certainly, inasmuch as it was rather flattering than otherwise.”

“I really cannot understand you, Rose.”

“I’m not surprised,” said she, laughing again. “It was some time before I could satisfy myself that he was not talking to somebody else, or reading out of a book; and when, peeping through the leaves, I perceived he was quite alone, I almost screamed out with laughing.”

“But why, child? What was the absurdity that amused you?”

“Fancy the creature. I need not describe him, Molly. You know him well, with his great staring light-green eyes, and his wild yellow hair. Imagine his walking madly to and fro, tossing his long arms about in uncouth gestures, while he asked himself seriously whether he would n’t be Shakspeare, or Milton, or Michael Angelo, or Nelson. Fancy his gravely inquiring of himself what remarkable qualities predominated in his nature: was he more of a sculptor, or a politician, or had fate destined him to discover new worlds, or to conquer the old ones? If I had n’t been actually listening to the creature, and occasionally look-

ing at him, too, I'd have doubted my senses. Oh dear! shall I ever forget the earnest absurdity of his manner as he said something about the 'immortal Potts'?"

The reminiscence was too much for her, for she threw herself on a sofa and laughed immoderately. As for me, unable to endure more, and fearful that Mary might finish by discovering me, I stole from the room, and rushed out into the wood.

What is it that renders ridicule more insupportable than vituperation? Why is the violence of passion itself more easy to endure than the sting of sarcastic satire? What weak spot in our nature does this peculiar passion assail? And, again, why are all the noble aspirations of high-hearted enthusiasm, the grand self-reliance of daring minds, ever to be made the theme of such scoffings? Have the scorers never read of Wolfe, of Murat, or of Nelson? Has not a more familiar instance reached them of one who foretold to an unwilling senate the time when they would hang in expectancy on his words, and treasure them as wisdom? Cruel, narrow-minded, and unjust world, with whom nothing succeeds except success!

The man who contracts a debt is never called cheat till his inability to discharge it has been proven clearly and beyond a doubt; but he who enters into an engagement with his own heart to gain a certain prize, or reach a certain goal, is made a mockery and a sneer by all whose own humble faculties represent such striving as impossible. From thoughts like these I went on to speculate whether I should ever be able, in the zenith of my great success, to forgive those captious and disparaging critics who had once endeavored to damp my ardor and bar my career. I own I found it exceedingly difficult to be generous, and in particular to that young minx of sixteen who had dared to make a jest of my pretensions.

I wandered along thus for hours. Many a grassy path of even sward led through the forest, and, taking one of those which skirted the stream, I strolled along, unconscious alike of time and place. Out of the purely personal interests which occupied my mind sprang others, and I bethought me with a grim satisfaction of the severe lesson Mary must

have, ere this, read Rose upon her presumption and her flippancy, telling her, in stern accents, how behind that screen the man was standing she had dared to make the subject of her laughter. Oh, how she blushes! what flush of crimson shame spreads over her face, her temples, and her neck; what large tears overflow her lids, and fall along her cheeks! I actually pity her suffering, and am pained at her grief.

"Spare her, dear Mary!" I cry out; "after all, she is but a child. Why blame her that she cannot measure greatness, as philosophers measure mountains, by the shadow?"

Egotism, in every one of its moods and tenses, must have a strong fascination. I walked on for many a mile while thus thinking, without the slightest sense of weariness, or any want of food. The morning glided over, and the hot noon was passed, and the day was sobering down into the more solemn tints of coming evening, and I still loitered, or lay in the tall grass deep in my musings.

In taking my handkerchief from my pocket, I accidentally drew forth the priest's letter, and in a sort of half-indolent curiosity, proceeded to read it. The hand was cramped and rugged, the writing that of a man to whom the manual part of correspondence is a heavy burden, and who consequently incurs such labor as rarely as is possible. The composition had all the charm of ease, and was as unstudied as need be; the writer being evidently one who cared little for the graces of style, satisfied to discuss his subject in the familiar terms of his ordinary conversation.

Although I did not mean to impose more than an extract from it on my reader, I must reserve even that much for my next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER DYKE'S LETTER.

FATHER DYKE was one of those characters which Ireland alone produces,—a sporting priest. In France, Spain, or Italy, the type is unknown. Time was, when the *abbé*, elegant, witty, and well-bred, was a great element of polished life; when his brilliant conversation and his insidious address threw all the charm of culture over a society which was only rescued from coarseness by the marvellous dexterity of such intellectual gladiators. They have passed away, like many other things brilliant and striking: the gilded coach, the red-heeled slipper, and the supper of the regency; the powdered marquise, for a smile of whose dimpled mouth the deadly rapier has flashed in the moonlight; the perfumed beauty, for one of whose glances a poet would have racked his brain to render worthily in verse; the gilded *salon* where, in a sort of incense, all the homage of genius was offered up before the altar of loveliness,—gone are they all!

Au fond, the world is pretty much the same, although we drive to a club dinner in a one-horse brougham; and if we meet the *curé* of St. Roch, we find him to be rather a morose middle-aged man with a taste for truffles, and a talent for silence. It is not as the successor of the witty *abbé* that I adduce the sporting priest, but simply as a variety of the ecclesiastical character which, doubtless, a very few more years will have consigned to the realm of history. He, too, will be a bygone! Father Tom, as he was popularly called, never needing any more definite designation, was *tam Marte quam Mercurio*, as much poacher as priest, and made his sporting acquirements subservient to the demands of an admirable table. The thickest salmon, the curdiest trout, the fattest partridge, and the most tender woodcock smoked

on his board, and, rumor said, cooked with a delicacy that more pretentious houses could not rival. In the great world nothing is more common than to see some favored individual permitted to do things which, by common voice, are proclaimed impracticable or improper. With a sort of prescriptive right to outrage the ordinances of society, such people accept no law but their own inclination, and seem to declare that they are altogether exempt from the restraints that bind other men. In a small way, and an humble sphere, Father Tom enjoyed this privilege, and there was not in his whole county to be found one man churlish or ungenerous enough to dispute it; and thus was he suffered to throw his line, snap his gun, or unleash his dog in precincts where many with higher claims had been refused permission.

It was not alone that he enjoyed the invigorating pleasure of field sports in practice, but he delighted in everything which bore any relationship to them. There was not a column of "Bell's Life" in which he had not his sympathy, — the pigeon match, the pedestrian, the Yankee trotter, the champion for the silver sculls at Chelsea, the dog "Billy," were all subjects of interest to him. Never did the most inveterate blue-stocking more delight in the occasion of meeting a great celebrity of letters, than did he when chance threw him in the way of the jock who rode the winner at the Oaks, or the "Game Chicken" who punished the "Croydon Pet" in the prize ring. But now for the letter, which will as fully reveal the man as any mere description. It was a narrative of races he had attended, and rowing-matches he had witnessed, with little episodes of hawking, badger-drawing, and cock-fighting intermixed.

"I came down here — Brighton — to swim for a wager of five-and-twenty sovereigns against a Major Blayse, of the Third Light Dragoon Guards; we made the match after mess at Aldershot, when neither of us was anything to speak of too sober; but as we were backed strongly, — he rather the favorite, — there was no way of drawing the bet. I beat him after a hard struggle; we were two hours and forty minutes in the water, and netted about sixty pounds besides. We dined with the depôt in the evening, and I won a ten-pound note on a question of whether there ought to be saffron in the American drink called 'greased lightning;' but this was not the

only piece of luck that attended me, as you shall hear. As I was taking my morning canter on the Downs, I perceived that a stranger—a jockey-like fellow, not quite a gentleman but near it—seemed to keep me in view; now riding past, now behind me, and always bestowing his whole attention on my nag. Of course, I showed the beast off to the best, and handled him skilfully. I thought to myself, he likes the pony; he'll be for making me an offer for him. I was right. I had just seated myself at breakfast, when the stranger sent his card, with a request to speak to me. He was a foreigner, but spoke very correct English, and his object was to learn if I would sell my horse. It is needless to say that I refused at once. The animal suited me, and I was one of those people who find it excessively difficult to be mounted to their satisfaction. I needed temper, training, action, gentleness, beauty, high courage, and perfect steadiness, and a number of such-like seeming incongruities. He looked a little impatient at all this; he seemed to say, 'I know all this kind of nonsense; I have heard shiploads of such gammon before. Be frank and say what's the figure; how much do you want for him?' He looked this, I say, but he never uttered a word, and at last I asked him,—

"Are you a dealer?"

"Well," said he, with an arch smile, "something in that line."

"I thought so," said I. "The pony is a rare good one."

"He nodded assent.

"He can jump a bar of his own height?"

"Another nod.

"And he's as fresh on his legs—"

"As if he were not twenty-six years old," he broke in.

"Twenty-six fiddle-sticks! Look at his mouth; he has an eight-year-old mouth."

"I know it," said he, dryly; "and so he had fourteen years ago. Will you take fifty sovereigns for him?" he added, drawing out a handful of gold from his pocket.

"No," said I, firmly; "nor sixty, nor seventy, nor eighty!"

"I am sorry to have intruded upon you," said he, rising, "and I beg you to excuse me. The simple fact is, that I am one who gains his living by horses, and it is only possible for me to exist by the generosity of those who deal with me."

"This appeal was a home thrust, and I said, 'What can you afford to give?'"

"All I have here," said he, producing a handful of gold, and spreading it on the table.

"We set to counting, and there were sixty-seven sovereigns in the mass. I swept off the money into the palm of my hand, and said, 'The beast is yours.'"

"He drew a long breath, as if to relieve his heart of a load of care, and said, 'Men of *my* stamp, and who lead such lives as I do, are rarely superstitious.'

"'Very true,' said I, with a nod of encouragement for him to go on.

"'Well,' said he, resuming, 'I never thought for a moment that any possibility could have made me so. If ever there was a man that laughed at lucky and unlucky days, despised omens, sneered at warnings, and scorned at predictions, I was he; and yet I have lived to be the most credulous and the most superstitious of men. It is now fourteen years and twenty-seven days — I remember the time to an hour — since I sold that pony to the Prince Ernest von Sachsenhausen, and since that day I never had luck. So long as I owned him all went well with me. I ought to tell you that I am the chief of a company of equestrians, and one corps, known as Klam's Kunst-Reiters, was the most celebrated on the Continent. In three years I made three hundred thousand guilders, and if the devil had not induced me to sell "*Schatzchen*" — that was his name — I should be this day as rich as Heman Rothschild! From the hour he walked out of the circus our calamities began. I lost my wife by fever at Wiesbaden, the most perfect high-school horsewoman in Europe; my son, of twenty years of age, fell, and dislocated his neck; the year after, at Vienna, my daughter Gretchen was blinded riding through a fiery hoop at Homburg; and four years later, all the company died of yellow fever at the Havannah, leaving me utterly beggared and ruined. Now these, you would say, though great misfortunes, are all in the course of common events. But what will you say when, on the eve of each of them, *Schatzchen* appeared to me in a dream, performing some well-known feat or other, and bringing down, as he ever did, thunders of applause; and never did he so appear without a disaster coming after. I struggled hard before I suffered this notion to influence me. It was years before I even mentioned it to any one; and I used for a while to make a jest of it in the circus, saying, "Take care of yourselves to-night, for I saw *Schatzchen*." Of course they were not the stuff to be deterred by such warnings, but they became so at last. That they did, and were so terrified, so thoroughly terrified, that the day after one of my visions not a single member of the troupe would venture on a hazardous feat of any kind; and if we performed at all, it was only some commonplace exercises, with few risks, and no daring exploits whatever. Worn out with evil fortune, crushed and almost broken-hearted, I struggled on for years, secretly determining, if ever I should chance upon him, to buy back *Schatzchen* with my last penny in the world. Indeed, there were moments in which such was the intense excitement of my mind, I could have committed a dread-

ful crime to regain possession of him. We were on the eve of embarking for Ostend the other night, when I saw you riding on the Downs, and I came ashore at once to track you out, for I knew him, though fully half a mile away. None of my comrades could guess what detained me, nor understand why I asked each of them in turn to lend me whatever money he could spare. It was in this way I made up the little purse you see. It was thus provided that I dared to present myself to-day before you.'

"As he gave me this narrative, his manner grew more eager and excited, and I could not help feeling that his mind, from the long-continued pressure of one thought, had received a serious shock. It was exactly one of those cases which physicians describe as leaving the intellect unimpaired, while some one faculty is under the thralldom of a dominant and all-pervading impression. I saw this more palpably, when, having declined to accept more than his original offer of fifty pounds, I replaced the remainder in his hand, he evinced scarcely any gratitude for my liberality, so totally was he engrossed by the idea that the horse was now his own, and that Fortune would no longer have any pretext for using him so severely as before.

"'I don't know, — I cannot know,' said he, 'if fortune means to deal more kindly by me than heretofore, but I feel a sort of confidence in the future now ; I have a kind of trustful courage as to what may come, that tells me no disaster will deter me, no mishap cast me down.'

"These were his words as he arose to take his leave. Of his meeting with the pony I am afraid to trust myself to speak. It was such an overflow of affection as one might witness from a long absent brother on being once again restored to his own. I cannot say that the beast knew him, nor would I go so far as to assert that he did not, for certainly some of his old instincts seemed gradually to revive within him on hearing certain words ; and when ordered to take a respectful farewell of me, the pony planted a foreleg on each of his master's shoulders, and, taking off his hat with his teeth, bowed twice or thrice in the most deferential fashion. I wished them both every success in life, and we parted. As I took my evening's stroll on the pier, I saw them embark for Ostend, the pony sheeted most carefully, and every imaginable precaution taken to insure him against cold. The man himself was poorly clad, and indifferently provided against the accidents of the voyage. He appeared to feel that the disparity required a word of apology, for he said, in a whisper : 'It'll soon furnish me with a warm cloak ; it'll not leave me long in difficulties !' I assure you, my dear Crofton, there was something contagious in the poor fellow's superstition, for, as he sailed away, the thought lay heavily on my heart, 'What if I, too, should have parted with my good luck in life ? How if I have

bartered my fortune for a few pieces of money?" The longer I dwelt on this theme, the more forcibly did it strike me. My original possession of the animal was accomplished in a way that aided the illusion. It was thus I won him on a hit of backgammon!"

As I read thus far, the paper dropped from my hands, my head reeled, and in a faint dreamy state, as if drugged by some strong narcotic, I sank, I know not how long, unconscious. The first thing which met my eyes on awakening, was the line, "I won him on a hit of backgammon!" The whole story was at once before me. It was of Blondel I was reading! Blondel was the beast whose influence had swayed one man's destiny. So long as he owned him, the world went well and happily with him; all prospered and succeeded. It was a charm like the old lamp of Aladdin. And this was the treasure I had lost. So far from imputing an ignorant superstition to the German, I concurred in every speculation, every theory of his invention. The man had evidently discovered one of those curious problems in what we rashly call the doctrine of chances. It was not the animal himself that secured good fortune, it was that, in his "circumstances," what Strauff calls "*die umringende Begebenheiten*" of his lot, this creature was sure to call forth efforts and develop resources in his possessor, of which, without his aid, he would have gone all through life unconscious.

The vulgar notion that our lives are the sport of accident, — the minute too early or too late, the calm that detained us, the snow-storm that blocked the road, the chance meeting with this or that man, which we lay such stress on, — what are they in reality but trivial incidents without force or effect, save that they impel to action? They call out certain qualities in our nature by which our whole characters become modified. Your horse balks at a fence, and throws you over his head; the fall is not a very grave one, and you are scarcely hurt; you have fallen into a turnip-field, and the honest fellow, who is hoeing away near, comes kindly to your aid, and, in good Samaritan fashion, bathes your temples and restores you. When you leave him at last, you go forth with a kindlier notion of human nature; you recognize the tie "that makes the whole world kin," and you seem to think

that hard toil hardens not the heart, nor a life of labor shuts out generous sympathies, — the lesson is a life one. But suppose that in your fall you alight on a bed of choice tulips, you descend in the midst of a rich parterre of starry anemones, and that your first conscious struggles are met with words of anger and reproach; instead of sorrow for your suffering, you hear sarcasms on your horsemanship, and insults on your riding, — no sympathy, no kindness, no generous anxiety for your safety, but all that irritate and offend, — more thought, in fact, for the petals of a flower than for the ligaments of your knee, — then, too, is the lesson a life one, and its fruits will be bitter memories for many a year. The events of our existence are in reality nothing, save in our treatment of them. By Blondel, I recognized one of those suggestive influences which mould fate by moulding temperament. The deep reflecting German saw this: it was clear *he* knew that in that animal was typified all that his life might become. Why should not I contest the prize with him? Blondel was charged with another destiny as well as his.

I turned once more to the letter, but I could not bear to read it; so many were the impertinent allusions to myself, my manner, my appearance, and my conversation. Still more insulting were the speculations as to what class or condition I belonged to. "He puzzled us completely," wrote the priest, "for while unmistakably vulgar in many things, there were certain indications of reading and education about him that refuted the notion of his being what Keldrum thought, — an escaped counter-jumper! The Guardsman insisted he was a valet; my own impression was, the fellow had kept a small circulating library, and gone mad with the three-volume novels. At all events, I have given him a lesson which, whether profitable or not to *him*, has turned out tolerably well for *me*. If ever you chance to hear of him, — his name was Podder or Pedder, I think, — pray let me know, for my curiosity is still unslaked about him." He thence went off to a sort of descriptive catalogue of my signs and tokens, so positively insulting that I cannot recall it; the whole winding up: "Add to all these an immense pomposity of tone, with a lisp, and a Dublin accent, and you can scarcely mistake him." Need I say, benevolent

reader, that fouler calumnies were never uttered, nor more unfounded slanders ever pronounced?

It is not in this age of photography that a man need defend his appearance. By the aid of sun and collodion, I may, perhaps, one day convince you that I am not so devoid of personal graces as this foul-mouthed priest would persuade you. I am, possibly, in this pledge, exceeding the exact limits which this publication may enable me to sustain. I may be contracting an engagement which cannot be, consistent with its principles, fulfilled. If so, I must be your artist; but I swear to you, that I shall not flatter. Potts, painted by himself, shall be a true portrait. Meanwhile I have time to look out for my canvas, and you will be patient enough to wait till it be filled.

Again to this confounded letter: —

"There is another reason" (wrote Dyke) "why I should like to chance upon this fellow." ("This fellow" meant me.) "I used to fancy myself unequalled in the imaginative department of conversation, by the vulgar called lying. Here, I own, with some shame, he was my match. A more fearless, determined, go-ahead liar, I never met. Now, as one who deems himself no small proficient in the art, I would really like to meet him once more. We could approach each other like the augurs of old, and agree to be candid and free-spoken together, exchanging our ideas on this great topic, and frankly communicating any secret knowledge each might deem that he possessed. I'd go a hundred miles to pass an evening with him alone, to hear from his own lips the sort of early training and discipline his mind went through, — who were his first instructors, what his original inducements. Of one thing I feel certain: a man thus constituted has only to put the curb upon his faculty to be most successful in life, his perils will all lie in the exuberance of his resources; let him simply bend himself to believe in some of the impositions he would force upon others. Let him give his delusions the force acquired by convictions, and there is no limit to what he may become. Be on the lookout, therefore, for him, as a great psychological phenomenon, the man who outlied

"Your sincerely attached friend,

"THOMAS DARCY DYKE.

"P. S. I have just remembered his name. It was Potts; the villain said from the Pozzo di Borgo family. I'm sure with this hint you can't fail to run him to earth; and I entreat of you spare no pains to do it."

There followed here some more impertinent personalities as clues to my discovery, which my indulgent reader will graciously excuse me if I do not stop to record; enough to say they were as unfounded as they were scurrilous.

Another and very different train of thought, however, soon banished these considerations. This letter had been given me by Crofton, who had already read it; he had perused all this insolent narrative about me before handing it to me, and doubtless, in so doing, had no other intention than to convey, in the briefest and most emphatic way to me, that I was found out. It was simply saying, in the shortest possible space, "Thou art the man!" Oh, the ineffable shame and misery of that thought! Oh, the bitterness of feeling! How my character should now be viewed and my future discussed! "Only think, Mary," I fancied I heard him say, — "only think who our friend should turn out to be, — this same Potts: the fellow that vanquished Father Dyke in story-telling, and outlied the priest! And here we have been lavishing kindness and attentions upon one who, after all, is little better than a swindler, sailing under false colors and fictitious credentials; for who can now credit one syllable about his having written those verses he read for us, or composed that tale of which he told us the opening? What a lesson in future about extending confidence to utter strangers! What caution and reserve should it not teach us! How guarded should we be not to suffer ourselves to be fascinated by the captivations of manner and the insinuating charms of address! If Potts had been less prepossessing in appearance, less gifted and agreeable, — if, instead of being a consummate man of the world, with the breeding of a courtier and the knowledge of a scholar, he had been a pedantic puppy with a lisp and a Dublin accent —" Oh, ignominy and disgrace! these were the very words of the priest in describing me, which came so aptly to my memory, and I grew actually sick with shame as I recalled them. I next became angry. Was this conduct of Crofton's delicate or considerate? Was it becoming in one who had treated me as his friend thus abruptly to conclude our intimacy by an insult? Handing me such a letter was saying, "There's a portrait; can you say any one it resembles?" How much

more generous had he said, "Tell me all about this wager of yours with Father Dyke; I want to hear *your* account of it, for old Tom is not the most veracious of mortals, nor the most mealy-mouthed of commentators. Just give me *your* version of the incident, Potts, and I am satisfied it will be the true one." That's what he might, that's what he ought to have said. I can swear it is what I, Potts, would have done by *him*, or by any other stranger whose graceful manners and pleasing qualities had won my esteem and conciliated my regard. I'd have said, "Potts, I have seen enough of life to know how unjust it is to measure men by one and the same standard. The ardent, impassioned nature cannot be ranked with the cold and calculating spirit. The imaginative man has the same necessity for the development of his creative faculty as the strongly muscular man of bodily exercise. He must blow off the steam of his invention, or the boiler will not contain it. You and Le Sage and Alexandre Dumas are a category. You are not the Clerks of a Census Commission, or Masters in Equity. You are the chartered libertines of fiction. Shake out your reefs, and go free, — free as the winds that waft you!"

To all these reflections came the last one. "I must be up and doing, and that speedily! I will recover Blondel, if I devote my life to the task. I will regain him, let the cost be what it may. Mounted upon that creature, I will ride up to the Rosary; the time shall be evening; a sun just sunk behind the horizon shall have left in the upper atmosphere a golden and rosy light, which shall tip his mane with a softened lustre, and shed over my own features a rich Titian-like tint. 'I come,' will I say, 'to vindicate the fair fame of one who once owned your affection. It is Potts, the man of impulse, the child of enthusiasm, who now presents himself before you. Poor, if you like to call him so, in worldly craft or skill, poor in its possessions, but rich, boundlessly rich, in the stores of an ideal wealth. Blondel and I are the embodiment of this idea. These fancies you have stigmatized as lies are but the pilot balloons by which great minds calculate the currents in that upper air they are about to soar in.'"

And, last of all, there was a sophistry that possessed a

great charm for my mind, in this wise: to enable a man, humble as myself, to reach that station in which a career of adventure should open before him, some ground must be won, some position gained. That I assume to be something that I am not, is simply to say that I trade upon credit. If my future transactions be all honorable and trustworthy, — if by a fiction, only known to my own heart, I acquire that eminence from which I can distribute benefits to hundreds, — who is to stigmatize me as a fraudulent trader?

Is it not a well-known fact, that many of those now acknowledged as the wealthiest of men, might, at some time or other of their lives, have been declared insolvent had the real state of their affairs been known? The world, however, had given them its confidence, and time did the rest. Let the same world be but as generous towards *me*! The day will come, — I say it confidently and boldly, — the day will come when I can “show my books,” and “point to my balance-sheet.” When Archimedes asked for a base on which to rest his lever, he merely uttered the great truth, that some one fixed point is essential to the success of a motive power.

It is by our use or abuse of opportunity we are either good or bad men. The physician is not less conversant with noxious drugs than the poisoner; the difference lies in the fact that the one employs his skill to alleviate suffering, the other to work out evil and destruction. If I, therefore, but make some feigned station in life the groundwork from which I can become the benefactor of my fellowmen, I shall be good and blameless. My heart tells me how well and how fairly I mean by the world: I would succor the weak, console the afflicted, and lift up the oppressed; and if to carry out grand and glorious conceptions of this kind all that be needed is a certain self-delusion which may extend its influence to others, “Go in,” I say, “Potts; be all that your fancy suggests, —

Dives, honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum, —
Be rich, honored and fair, a prince or a begum, —

but, above all, never distrust your destiny, or doubt your star.”

CHAPTER VIII.

IMAGINATION STIMULATED BY BRANDY AND WATER.

So absorbed was I in the reflections of which my last chapter is the record, that I utterly forgot how time was speeding, and perceived at last, to my great surprise, that I had strayed miles away from the Rosary, and that evening was already near. The spires and roofs of a town were distant about a mile at a bend of the river, and for this I now made, determined on no account to turn back, for how could I ever again face those who had read the terrible narrative of the priest's letter, and before whom I could only present myself as a cheat and impostor?

"No," thought I, "my destiny points onward, — and to Blondel; nothing shall turn me from my path." Less than an hour's walking brought me to the town, of which I had but time to learn the name, — New Ross. I left it in a small steamer for Waterford, a little vessel in correspondence with the mail packet for Milford, and which I learned would sail that evening at nine.

The same night saw me seated on the deck, bound for England. On the deck, I say, for I had need to husband my resources, and travel with every imaginable economy, not only because my resources were small in themselves, but that, having left all that I possessed of clothes and baggage at the Rosary, I should be obliged to acquire a complete outfit on reaching England.

It was a calm night, with a starry sky and a tranquil sea; and, when the cabin passengers had gone down to their berths, the captain did not oppose my stealing "aft" to the quarter-deck, where I could separate myself from the somewhat riotous company of the harvest laborers that thronged the forepart of the vessel. He saw, with that instinct a

sailor is eminently gifted with, that I was not of that class by which I was surrounded, and with a ready courtesy he admitted me to the privilege of isolation.

"You are going to enlist, I'll be bound," said he, as he passed me in his short deck walk. "Ain't I right?"

"No," said I; "I'm going to seek my fortune."

"Seek your fortune!" he repeated, with a slighting sort of laugh. "One used to read about fellows doing that in story books when a child, but it's rather strange to hear of it nowadays."

"And may I presume to ask why should it be more strange now than formerly? Is not the world pretty much what it used to be? Is not the drama of life the same stock piece our forefathers played ages ago? Are not the actors and the actresses made up of the precise materials their ancestors were? Can you tell me of a new sentiment, a new emotion, or even a new crime? Why, therefore, should there be a seeming incongruity in reviving any feature of the past?"

"Just because it won't do, my good friend," said he, bluntly. "If the law catches a fellow lounging about the world in these times, it takes him up for a vagabond."

"And what can be finer, grander, or freer than a vagabond?" I cried, with enthusiasm. "Who, I would ask you, sees life with such philosophy? Who views the wiles, the snares, the petty conflicts of the world with such a reflective calm as his? Caring little for personal indulgence, not solicitous for self-gratification, he has both the spirit and the leisure for observation. Diogenes was the type of the vagabond, and see how successive ages have acknowledged his wisdom."

"If I had lived in *his* day, I'd have set him picking oakum, for all that!" he replied.

"And probably, too, would have sent the 'blind old bard to the crank,'" said I.

"I'm not quite sure of whom you are talking," said he; "but if he was a good ballad-singer, I'd not be hard on him."

"O! Menin aeide Thea Peleidaeo Achilleos!" spouted I out, in rapture.

"That ain't high Dutch," asked he, "is it?"

"No," said I, proudly. "It is ancient Greek, — the god-like tongue of an immortal race."

"Immortal rascals!" he broke in. "I was in the fruit trade up in the Levant there, and such scoundrels as these Greek fellows I never met in my life."

"By what and whom made so?" I exclaimed eagerly. "Can you point to a people in the world who have so long resisted the barbarizing influence of a base oppression? Was there ever a nation so imbued with high civilization as to be enabled for centuries of slavery to preserve the traditions of its greatness? Have we the record of any race but this, who could rise from the slough of degradation to the dignity of a people?"

"You've been a play-actor, I take it?" asked he, dryly.

"No, sir, never!" replied I, with some indignation.

"Well, then, in the Methody line? You've done a stroke of preaching, I'll be sworn."

"You would be perjured in that case, sir," I rejoined, as haughtily.

"At all events, an auctioneer," said he, fairly puzzled in his speculations.

"Equally mistaken there," said I, calmly; "bred in the midst of abundance, nurtured in affluence, and educated with all the solicitous care that a fond parent could bestow —"

"Gammon!" said he, bluntly. "You are one of the swell mob in distress!"

"Is this like distress?" said I, drawing forth my purse in which were seventy-five sovereigns, and handing it to him. "Count over that, and say how just and how generous are your suspicions."

He gravely took the purse from me, and, stooping down to the binnacle light, counted over the money, scrutinizing carefully the pieces as he went.

"And who is to say this is n't 'swag'?" said he, as he closed the purse.

"The easiest answer to that," said I, "is, would it be likely for a thief to show his booty, not merely to a stranger, but to a stranger who suspected him?"

"Well, that is something, I confess," said he, slowly.

"It ought to be more, — it ought to be everything. If distrust were not a debasing sentiment, obstructing the impulses of generosity, and even invading the precincts of justice, you would see far more reason to confide in than to disbelieve me."

"I've been done pretty often afore now," he muttered, half to himself.

"What a fallacy that is!" cried I, contemptuously. "Was not the pittance that some crafty impostor wrung from your compassion well repaid to you in the noble self-consciousness of your generosity? Did not your venison on that day taste better when you thought of his pork chop? Had not your Burgundy gained flavor by the memory of the glass of beer that was warming the half-chilled heart in *his* breast? Oh, the narrow mockery of fancying that we are not better by being deceived!"

"How long is it since you had your head shaved?" he asked dryly.

"I have never been the inmate of an asylum for lunatics," said I, divining and answering the impertinent insinuation.

"Well, I own you are a rum un," said he, half musingly.

"I accept even this humble tribute to my originality," said I, with a sort of proud defiance. "I am well aware how *he* must be regarded who dares to assert his own individuality."

"I'd be very curious to know," said he, after a pause of several minutes, "how a fellow of your stamp sets to work about gaining his livelihood? What's his first step? how does he go about it?"

I gave no other answer than a smile of scornful meaning.

"I meant nothing offensive," resumed he, "but I really have a strong desire to be enlightened on this point."

"You are doubtless impressed with the notion," said I, boldly, "that men possessed of some distinct craft or especial profession are alone needed by the world of their fellows. That one must be doctor or lawyer or baker or shoemaker, to gain his living, as if life had no other wants than to be clothed and fed and physicked and litigated. As if humanity had not its thousand emotional moods, its wayward impulses, its trials and temptations, all of them

more needing guidance, support, direction, and counsel, than the sickest patient needs a physician. It is on this world that I throw myself; I devote myself to guide infancy, to console age, to succor the orphan, and support the widow, — morally, I mean."

"I begin to suspect you are a most artful vagabond," said he half angrily.

"I have long since reconciled myself to the thought of an unjust appreciation," said I. "It is the consolation dull men accept when confronted with those of original genius. You can't help confessing that all your distrust of me has grown out of the superiority of my powers, and the humble figure you have presented in comparison with me."

"Do you rank modesty amongst these same powers?" he asked slyly.

"Modesty I reject," said I, "as being a conventional form of hypocrisy."

"Come down below," said he, "and take a glass of brandy and water. It's growing chilly here, and we shall be the better of something to cheer us."

Seated in his comfortable little cabin, and with a goodly array of liquors before me to choose from, I really felt a self-confidence in the fact that, if I were not something out of the common, I could not then be there. "There must be in my nature," thought I, "that element which begets success, or I could not always find myself in situations so palpably beyond the accidents of my condition."

My host was courtesy itself; no sooner was I his guest than he adopted towards me a manner of perfect politeness. No more allusions to my precarious mode of life, never once a reference to my adventurous future. Indeed, with an almost artful exercise of good breeding, he turned the conversation towards himself, and gave me a sketch of his own life.

It was not in any respects a remarkable one; though it had its share of those mishaps and misfortunes which every sailor must have confronted. He was wrecked in the Pacific, and robbed in the Havannah; had his crew desert him at San Francisco, and was boarded by Riff pirates, and sold in Barbary just as every other blue jacket used to be;

and I listened to the story, only marvelling what a dreary sameness pervades all these narratives. Why, for one trait of the truthful to prove his tale, I could have invented fifty. There were no little touches of sentiment or feeling, no relieving lights of human emotion, in his story. I never felt, as I listened, any wish that he should be saved from shipwreck, baffle his persecutors, or escape his captors; and I thought to myself, "This fellow has certainly got no narrative gusto." Now for *my* turn: we had each of us partaken freely of the good liquor before us. The Captain in his quality of talker, I in my capacity of listener, had filled and refilled several times. There was not anything like inebriety, but there was that amount of exultation, a stage higher than mere excitement, which prompts men, at least men of temperaments like mine, not to suffer themselves to occupy rear rank positions, but at any cost to become foreground and prominent figures.

"You have heard of the M'Gillicuddys, I suppose?" asked I. He nodded, and I went on. "You see, then, at this moment before you, the last of the race. I mean, of course, of the elder branch, for there are swarms of the others, well to do and prosperous also, and with fine estated properties. I'll not weary you with family history. I'll not refer to that remote time when my ancestors wore the crown, and ruled the fair kingdom of Kerry. In the Annals of the Four Masters, and also in the Chronicles of Theal-bogh O'Faudlemh, you'll find a detailed account of our house. I'll simply narrate for you the immediate incident which has made me what you see me, — an outcast and a beggar.

"My father was the tried and trusted friend of that noble-hearted but mistaken man, Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The famous attempt of the year 'eight was concerted between them; and all the causes of its failure, secret as they are and forever must be, are known to him who now addresses you. I dare not trust myself to talk of these times or things, lest I should by accident let drop what might prove strictly confidential. I will but recount one incident, and that a personal one, of the period. On the night of Lord Edward's capture, my father, who had invited a friend — deep himself

in the conspiracy — to dine with him, met his guest on the steps of his hall door. Mr. Hammond — this was his name — was pale and horror-struck, and could scarcely speak, as my father shook his hand. 'Do you know what has happened, Mac?' said he to my father. 'Lord Edward is taken, Major Sirr and his party have tracked him to his hiding-place; they have got hold of all our papers, and we are lost. By this time to-morrow every man of us will be within the walls of Newgate.'

"Don't look so gloomily, Tom,' said my father. 'Lord Edward will escape them yet; he's not a bird to be snared so easily; and, after all, we shall find means to slip our cables too. Come in, and enjoy your sirloin and a good glass of port, and you'll view the world more pleasantly.' With a little encouragement of this sort he cheered him up, and the dinner passed off agreeably enough; but still my father could see that his friend was by no means at his ease, and at every time the door opened he would start with a degree of surprise that augured anxiety of some coming event. From these and other signs of uneasiness in his manner, my father drew his own conclusions, and with a quick intelligence of look communicated his suspicions to my mother, who was herself a keen and shrewd observer.

"Do you think, Matty,' said he, as they sat over their wine, 'that I could find a bottle of the old green seal if I was to look for it in the cellar? It has been upwards of forty years there, and I never touch it save on especial occasions; but an old friend like Hammond deserves such a treat.'

"My father fancied that Hammond grew paler as he thus alluded to their old friendship, and he gave my mother a rapid glance of his sharp eye, and, taking the cellar key, he left the room. Immediately outside the door, he hastened to the stable, and saddled and bridled a horse, and, slipping quietly out, he rode for the sea-coast, near the Skerries. It was sixteen miles from Dublin, but he did the distance within the hour. And well was it for him that he employed such speed! With a liberal offer of money and the gold watch he wore, he secured a small fishing-smack to convey him over to France, for which he sailed immediately. I

have said it was well that he employed such speed; for, after waiting with suppressed impatience for my father's return from the cellar, Hammond expressed to my mother his fears lest my father might have been taken ill. She tried to quiet his apprehensions, but the very calmness of her manner served only to increase them. 'I can bear this no longer,' cried he, at last, rising, in much excitement, from his chair; 'I must see what has become of him!' At the same moment the door was suddenly flung open, and an officer of police, in full uniform, presented himself. 'He has got away, sir,' said he, addressing Hammond; 'the stable-door is open, and one of the horses missing.'

"My mother, from whom I heard the story, had only time to utter a 'Thank God!' before she fainted. On recovering her senses, she found herself alone in the room. The traitor Hammond and the police had left her without even calling the servants to her aid."

"And your father, — what became of him?" asked the skipper, eagerly.

"He arrived in Paris in sorry plight enough; but, fortunately, Clarke, whose influence with the Emperor was unbounded, was a distant connection of our family. By his intervention my father obtained an interview with his Majesty, who was greatly struck by the adventurous spirit and daring character of the man; not the less so because he had the courage to disabuse the Emperor of many notions and impressions he had conceived about the readiness of Ireland to accept French assistance.

"Though my father would much have preferred taking service in the army, the Emperor, who had strong prejudices against men becoming soldiers who had not served in every grade from the ranks upwards, opposed this intention, and employed him in a civil capacity. In fact, to his management were intrusted some of the most delicate and difficult secret negotiations; and he gained a high name for acuteness and honorable dealing. In recognition of his services, his name was inscribed in the Grand Livre for a considerable pension; but at the fall of the dynasty, this, with hundreds of others equally meritorious, was annulled; and my father, worn out with age and disappointment together,

sank at last, and died at Dinant, where my mother was buried but a few years previously. Meanwhile he was tried and found guilty of high treason in Ireland, and all his lands and other property forfeited to the Crown. My present journey was simply a pilgrimage to see the old possessions that once belonged to our race. It was my father's last wish that I should visit the ancient home of our family, and stand upon the hills that once acknowledged us as their ruler. He never desired that I should remain a French subject; a lingering love for his own country mingled in his heart with a certain resentment towards France, who had certainly treated him with ingratitude; and almost his last words to me were, 'Distrust the Gaul.' When I told you awhile back that I was nurtured in affluence, it was so to all appearance; for my father had spent every shilling of his capital on my education, and I was under the firm conviction that I was born to a very great fortune. You may judge the terrible revulsion of my feelings when I learned that I had to face the world almost, if not actually, a beggar.

"I could easily have attached myself as a hanger-on of some of my well-to-do relations. Indeed, I will say for them, that they showed the kindest disposition to befriend me; but the position of a dependant would have destroyed every chance of happiness for me, and so I resolved that I would fearlessly throw myself upon the broad ocean of life, and trust that some sea current or favoring wind would bear me at last into a harbor of safety."

"What can you do?" asked the skipper, curtly.

"Everything, and nothing! I have, so to say, the 'sentiment' of all things in my heart, but am not capable of executing one of them. With the most correct ear, I know not a note of music; and though I could not cook you a chop, I have the most excellent appreciation of a well-dressed dinner."

"Well," said he, laughing, "I must confess I don't suspect these to be exactly the sort of gifts to benefit your fellow-man."

"And yet," said I, "it is exactly to individuals of this stamp that the world accords its prizes. The impresario

that provides the opera could not sing nor dance. The general who directs the campaign might be sorely puzzled how to clean his musket or pipeclay his belt. The great minister who imposes a tax might be totally unequal to the duty of applying its provisions. Ask him to gauge a hogshead of spirits, for instance. *My* position is like *theirs*. I tell you, once more, the world wants men of wide conceptions and far-ranging ideas, — men who look to great results and grand combinations."

"But, to be practical, how do you mean to breakfast to-morrow morning?"

"At a moderate cost, but comfortably: tea, rolls, two eggs, and a rumpsteak with fried potatoes."

"What's your name?" said he, taking out his note-book. "I mustn't forget you when I hear of you next."

"For the present, I call myself Potts, — Mr. Potts, if you please."

"Write it here yourself," said he, handing me the pencil. And I wrote in a bold, vigorous hand, "Algernon Sydney Potts," with the date.

"Preserve that autograph, Captain," said I; "it is in no spirit of vanity I say it, but the day will come you'll refuse a ten-pound note for it."

"Well, I'd take a trifle less just now," said he, smiling.

He sat for some time gravely contemplating the writing, and at length, in a sort of half soliloquy, said, "Bob would like him, — he would suit Bob." Then, lifting his head, he addressed me: "I have a brother in command of one of the P. and O. steamers, — just the fellow for *you*. He has got ideas pretty much like your own about success in life, and won't be persuaded that he isn't the first seaman in the English navy; or that he hasn't a plan to send Cherbourg and its breakwater sky-high, at twenty-four hours' warning."

"An enthusiast, — a visionary, I have no doubt," said I, contemptuously.

"Well, I think you might be more merciful in your judgment of a man of your own stamp," retorted he, laughing. "At all events, it would be as good as a play to see you together. If you should chance to be at Malta or Marseilles,

when the 'Clarence' touches there, just ask for Captain Rogers; tell him you know me, that will be enough."

"Why not give me a line of introduction to him?" said I, with an easy indifference. "These things serve to clear away the awkwardness of a self-presentation."

"I don't care if I do," said he, taking a sheet of paper, and beginning "Dear Bob," — after which he paused and deliberated, muttering the words "Dear Bob" three or four times over below his breath.

"'Dear Bob,'" said I, aloud, in the tone of one dictating to an amanuensis, — "'This brief note will be handed to you by a very valued friend of mine, Algernon Sydney Potts, a man so completely after your own heart that I feel a downright satisfaction in bringing you together.'"

"Well, that ain't so bad," said he, as he uttered the last words which fell from his pen, — "'in bringing you together.'"

"Go on," said I, dictatorially, and continued: "'Thrown by a mere accident myself into his society, I was so struck by his attainments, the originality of his views, and the wide extent of his knowledge of life —' Have you *that* down?"

"No," said he, in some confusion; "I am only at 'entertainments.'"

"I said '*at*-tainments,' sir," said I, rebukingly, and then repeating the passage word for word, till he had written it, — "'that I conceived for him a regard and an esteem rarely accorded to others than our oldest friends.' One word more: 'Potts, from certain circumstances, which I cannot here enter upon, may appear to you in some temporary inconvenience as regards money —'"

Here the Captain stopped, and gave me a most significant look: it was at once an appreciation and an expression of drollery.

"Go on," said I, dryly. "'If so,'" resumed I, "'be guardedly cautious neither to notice his embarrassment nor allude to it; above all, take especial care that you make no offer to remove the inconvenience, for he is one of those whose sensibilities are so fine, and whose sentiments so fastidious, that he could never recover, in his own esteem, the dignity compromised by such an incident.'"

"Very neatly turned," said he, as he re-read the passage. "I think that's quite enough."

"Ample. You have nothing more to do than sign your name to it."

He did this, with a verificatory flourish at foot, folded and sealed the letter, and handed it to me, saying, —

"If it were n't for the handwriting, Bob would never believe all that fine stuff came from *me*; but you'll tell him it was after three glasses of brandy-and-water that I dashed it off, — that will explain everything."

I promised faithfully to make the required explanation, and then proceeded to make some inquiries about this brother Bob, whose nature was in such a close affinity with my own. I could learn, however, but little beyond the muttered acknowledgment that Bob was a "queer un," and that there was never his equal for "falling upon good luck, and spending it after," a description which, when applied to my own conscience, told an amount of truth that was actually painful.

"There's no saying," said I, as I pocketed the letter, "if this epistle should ever reach your brother's hand, my course in life is too wayward and uncertain for me to say in what corner of the earth fate may find me; but if we *are* to meet, you shall hear of it. Rogers," — I said this in all the easy familiarity which brandy inspired, — "I'll tell your brother of the warm and generous hospitality you extended to me, at a time that, to all seeming, I needed such attentions, — at a time, I say, when none but myself could know how independently I stood as regarded means; and of one thing be assured, Rogers, he whose caprice it now is to call himself Potts is your friend, your fast friend, for life."

He wrung my hand cordially, — perhaps it was the easiest way for an honest sailor, as he was, to acknowledge the patronizing tone of my speech, — but I could plainly see that he was sorely puzzled by the situation, and possibly very well pleased that there was no third party to be a spectator of it.

"Throw yourself there on that sofa," said he, "and take a sleep." And with that piece of counsel he left me, and went up on deck.

CHAPTER IX.

MY INTEREST IN A LADY FELLOW-TRAVELLER.

NEXT mornings are terrible things, whether one awakes to the thought of some awful run of ill-luck at play, or with the racking headache of new port or a very "fruity" Burgundy. They are dreadful, too, when they bring memories — vague and indistinct, perhaps — of some serious altercations, passionate words exchanged, and expressions of defiance reciprocated; but, as a measure of self-reproach and humiliation, I know not any distress can compare with the sensation of awaking to the consciousness that our cups have so ministered to imagination that we have given a mythical narrative of ourself and our belongings, and have built up a card edifice of greatness that must tumble with the first touch of truth.

It was a sincere satisfaction to me that I saw nothing of the skipper on that "next morning." He was so occupied with all the details of getting into port, that I escaped his notice, and contrived to land unremarked. Little scraps of my last night's biography would obtrude themselves upon me, mixed up strangely with incidents of that same skipper's life, so that I was actually puzzled at moments to remember whether *he* was not the descendant of the famous rebel friend of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and *I* it was who was sold in the public square at Tunis.

These dissolving views of an evening before are very difficult problems, — not to *you*, most valued reader, whose conscience is not burglariously assaulted by a riotous imagination, but to the poor weak Potts-like organizations, the men who never enjoy a real sensation, or taste a real pleasure, save on the hypothesis of a mock situation.

I sat at my breakfast in the "Goat" meditating these things. The grand problem to resolve was this: Is it better

to live a life of dull incidents and commonplace events in one's own actual sphere, or, creating, by force of imagination, an ideal status, to soar into a region of higher conceptions and more pictorial situations? What could existence in the first case offer me? A wearisome beaten path, with nothing to interest, nothing to stimulate me. On the other side lay glorious regions of lovely scenery, peopled with figures the most graceful and attractive. I was at once the associate of the wise, the witty, and the agreeable, with wealth at my command, and great prizes within my reach. Illusions all! to be sure; but what are not illusions, — if by that word you take mere account of permanence? What is it in this world that we love to believe real is not illusionary, — the question of duration being the only difference? Is not beauty perishable? Is not wit soon exhausted? What becomes of the proudest physical strength after middle life is reached? What of eloquence when the voice fails or loses its facility of inflection?

All these considerations, however convincing to myself, were not equally satisfactory as regarded others; and so I sat down to write a letter to Crofton, explaining the reasons of my sudden departure, and enclosing him Father Dyke's epistle, which I had carried away with me. I began this letter with the most firm resolve to be truthful and accurate. I wrote down, not only the date, but the day. "Goat, Milford," followed, and then, "My dear Crofton, — It would ill become one who has partaken of your generous hospitality, and who, from an unknown stranger, was admitted to the privilege of your intimacy, to quit the roof beneath which the happiest hours of his life were passed without expressing the deep shame and sorrow such a step has cost him, while he bespeaks your indulgence to hear the reason." This was my first sentence, and it gave me uncommon trouble. I desired to be dignified, yet grateful, proud in my humility, grieved over an abrupt departure, but sustained by a manly confidence in the strength of my own motives. If I read it over once, I read it twenty times; now deeming it too diffuse, now fearing lest I had compressed my meaning too narrowly. Might it not be better to open thus: "Strike, but hear me, dear Crofton, or, be-

fore condemning the unhappy creature whose abject cry for mercy may seem but to increase the presumption of his guilt, and in whose faltering accents may appear the signs of a stricken conscience, read over, dear friend, the entire of this letter, weigh well the difficulties and dangers of him who wrote it, and say, is he not rather a subject for pity than rebuke? Is not this more a case for a tearful forgiveness than for chastisement and reproach?"

Like most men who have little habit of composition, my difficulties increased with every new attempt, and I became bewildered and puzzled what to choose. It was vitally important that the first lines of my letter should secure the favorable opinion of the reader; by one unhappy word, one ill-selected expression, a whole case might be prejudiced. I imagined Crofton angrily throwing the epistle from him with an impatient "Stuff and nonsense! a practised humbugger!" or, worse again, calling out, "Listen to this, Mary. Is not Master Potts a cool hand? Is not this brazening it out with a vengeance?" Such a thought was agony to me; the very essence of my theory about life was to secure the esteem and regard of others. I yearned after the good opinion of my fellow-men, and there was no amount of falsehood I would not incur to obtain it. No, come what would of it, the Croftons must not think ill of me. They must not only believe me guiltless of ingratitude, but some one whose gratitude was worth having. It will elevate them in their own esteem if they suppose that the pebble they picked up in the highway turned out to be a ruby. It will open their hearts to fresh impulses of generosity; they will not say to each other, "Let us be more careful another time; let us be guarded against showing attention to mere strangers; remember how we were taken in by that fellow Potts; what a specious rascal he was, — how plausible, how insinuating!" but rather, "We can afford to be confiding, our experiences have taught us trustfulness. Poor Potts is a lesson that may inspire a hopeful belief in others." How little benefit can any one in his own individual capacity confer upon the world, but what a large measure of good may be distributed by the way he influences others. Thus, for instance, by one well-sustained delusion of mine, I inspire a

fund of virtues which, in my merely truthful character, I could never pretend to originate. "Yes," thought I, "the Croftons shall continue to esteem me; Potts shall be a beacon to guide, not a sunken rock to wreck them."

Thus resolving, I sat down to inform them that on my return from a stroll, I was met by a man bearing a telegram, informing me of the dying condition of my father's only brother, my sole relative on earth; that, yielding only to the impulse of my affection, and not thinking of preparation, I started on board of a steamer for Waterford, and thence for Milford, on my way to Brighton. I vaguely hinted at great expectations, and so on, and then, approaching the difficult problem of Father Dyke's letter, I said, "I enclose you the priest's letter, which amused me much. With all his shrewdness, the worthy churchman never suspected how completely my friend Keldrum and myself had humbugged him, nor did he discover that our little dinner and the episode that followed it were the subjects of a wager between ourselves. His marvellous cunning was thus for once at fault, as I shall explain to you more fully when we meet, and prove to you that, upon this occasion at least, he was not deceiver, but dupe!" I begged to have a line from him to the "Crown Hotel, Brighton," and concluded.

With this act, I felt I had done with the past, and now addressed myself to the future. I purchased a few cheap necessities for the road, as few and as cheap as was well possible. I said to myself, Fortune shall lift you from the very dust of the high-road, Potts; not one advantageous adjunct shall aid your elevation!

The train by which I was to leave did not start till noon, and to while away time I took up a number of the "Times," which the "Goat" appeared to receive at third or fourth hand. My eye fell upon that memorable second column, in which I read the following:—

"Left his home in Dublin on the 8th ult., and not since been heard of, a young gentleman, aged about twenty-two years, five feet nine and a quarter in height, slightly formed, and rather stooped in the shoulders; features pale and melancholy; eyes grayish, inclining to hazel; hair light brown, and worn long behind. He had on at his departure —"

I turned impatiently to the foot of the advertisement, and found that to any one giving such information as might lead to his discovery was promised a liberal reward, on application to Messrs. Potts and Co., compounding chemists and apothecaries, Mary's Abbey. I actually grew sick with anger as I read this. To what end was it that I built up a glorious edifice of imaginative architecture, if by one miserable touch of coarse fact it would crumble into clay? To what purpose did I intrigue with Fortune to grant me a special destiny, if I were thus to be classed with runaway traders or strayed terriers? I believe in my heart I could better have borne all the terrors of a charge of felony than the lowering, debasing, humiliating condition of being advertised for on a reward.

I had long since determined to be free as regarded the ties of country. I now resolved to be equally so with respect to those of family. I will be Potts no longer. I will call myself for the future — let me see — what shall it be, that will not involve a continued exercise of memory, and the troublesome task of unmarking my linen? I was forgetting in this that I had none, all my wearables being left behind at the Rosary. Something with an initial P was requisite; and after much canvassing, I fixed on Pottinger. If by an unhappy chance I should meet one who remembered me as Potts, I reserved the right of mildly correcting him by saying, "Pottinger, Pottinger! the name Potts was given me when at Eton for shortness." They tell us that amongst the days of our exultation in life, few can compare with that in which we exchange a jacket for a tailed coat. The spring from the tadpole to the full-grown frog, the emancipation from boyhood into adolescence, is certainly very fascinating. Let me assure my reader that the bound from a monosyllabic name to a high-sounding epithet of three syllables is almost as enchanting as this assumption of the *toga virilis*. I had often felt the terrible brevity of Potts; I had shrunk from answering the question, "What name, sir?" from the indescribable shame of saying "Potts;" but Pottinger could be uttered slowly and with dignity. One could repose on the initial syllable, as if to say, "Mark well what I am saying; this is a name to be remembered." With that, there must

have been great and distinguished Pottingers, rich men, men of influence and acres; from these I could at leisure select a parentage.

"Do you go by the twelve-fifteen train, sir?" asked the waiter, breaking in upon these meditations. "You have no time to lose, sir."

With a start, I saw it was already past twelve; so I paid my bill with all speed, and, taking my knapsack in my hand, hurried away to the train. There was considerable confusion as I arrived, a crush of cabs, watermen, and porters blocked the way, and the two currents of an arriving and departing train struggled against and confronted each other. Amongst those who, like myself, were bent on entering the station-house, was a young lady in deep mourning, whose frail proportions and delicate figure gave no prospect of resisting the shock and conflict before her. Seeing her so destitute of all protection, I espoused her cause, and after a valorous effort and much buffeting, I fought her way for her to the ticket-window, but only in time to hear the odious crash of a great bell, the bang of a glass door, and the cry of a policeman on duty, "No more tickets, gentlemen; the train is starting."

"Oh! what shall I do?" cried she, in an accent of intense agony, inadvertently addressing the words to myself: "what shall I do?"

"There's another train to start at three-forty," said I, consolingly. "I hope that waiting will be no inconvenience to you. It is a slow one, to be sure, stops everywhere, and only arrives in town at two o'clock in the morning."

I heard her sob, — I distinctly heard her sob behind her thick black veil as I said this; and to offer what amount of comfort I could, I added, "I, too, am disappointed, and obliged to await the next departure; and if I can be of the least service in any way —"

"Oh, no, sir! I am very grateful to you, but there is nothing — I mean — there is no help for it!" And here her voice dropped to a mere whisper.

"I sincerely trust," said I, in an accent of great deference and sympathy, "that the delay may not be the cause of grave inconvenience to you; and although a perfect stranger, if any assistance I can offer —"

"No, sir; there is really nothing I could ask from your kindness. It was in turning back to bid good-bye a second time to my mother—" Here her agitation seemed to choke her, for she turned away and said no more.

"Shall I fetch a cab for you?" I asked. "Would you like to go back till the next train starts?"

"Oh, by no means, sir! We live three miles from Milford; and, besides, I could not bear—" Here again she broke down, but added, after a pause, "It is the first time I have been away from home!"

With a little gentle force I succeeded in inducing her to enter the refreshment-room of the station, but she would take nothing; and after some attempts to engage her in conversation to while away the dreary time, I perceived that it would be a more true politeness not to obtrude upon her sorrow; and so I lighted my cigar, and proceeded to walk up and down the long terrace of the station. Three trunks, or rather two and a hat-box, kept my knapsack company on the side of the tramway; and on these I read, inscribed in a large hand, "Miss K. Herbert, per steamer 'Ardent,' Ostend." I started. Was it not in that direction my own steps were turned? Was not Blondel in Belgium, and was it not in search of him that I was bent? "Oh, Fate!" I cried, "what subtle device of thine is this? What wily artifice art thou now engaged in? Is this a snare, or is it an aid? Hast thou any secret purpose in this rencontre? for with thee there are no chances, no accidents in thy vicissitudes; all is prepared and fitted, like a piece of door carpentry." And then I fell into weaving a story for the young lady. She was an orphan. Her father, the curate of the little parish she lived in, had just died, leaving herself and her mother in direst distress. She was leaving home, — the happy home of her childhood (I saw it all before me, — cottage, and garden, and little lawn, with its one cow and two sheep, and the small green wicket beside the road), and she was leaving all these to become a governess to an upstart, mill-owning, vulgar family at Brussels. Poor thing! how my heart bled for her! What a life of misery lay before her, — what trials of temper and of pride! The odious children — I know they are odious — will torture

her to the quick; and Mrs. Treddles, or whatever her detestable name is, will lead her a terrible life from jealousy; and she'll have to bear everything, and cry over it in secret, remembering the once happy time in that honeysuckled porch, where poor papa used to read Wordsworth for them.

What a world of sorrow on every side; and how easily might it be made otherwise! What gigantic efforts are we forever making for something which we never live to enjoy! Striving to be freer, greater, better governed, and more lightly taxed, and all the while forgetting that the real secret is to be on better terms with each other, — more generous, more forgiving, less apt to take offence or bear malice. Of mere material goods, there is far more than we need. The table would accommodate more than double the guests, could we only agree to sit down in orderly fashion; but here we have one occupying three chairs, while another crouches on the floor, and some even prefer smashing the furniture to letting some more humbly born take a place near them. I wish they would listen to me on this theme. I wish, instead of all this social science humbug and art-union balderdash, they would hearken to the voice of a plain man, saying, Are you not members of one family, — the individuals of one household? Is it not clear to you, if you extend the kindly affections you now reserve for the narrow circle wherein you live to the wider area of mankind, that, while diffusing countless blessings to others, you will yourself become better, more charitable, more kind-hearted, wider in reach of thought, more catholic in philanthropy? I can imagine such a world, and feel it to be a Paradise, — a world with no social distinctions, no inequalities of condition, and, consequently, no insolent pride of station, nor any degrading subserviency of demeanor, no rivalries, no jealousies, — love and benevolence everywhere. In such a sphere the calm equanimity of mind by which great things are accomplished, would in itself constitute a perfect heaven. No impatience of temper, no passing irritation —

"Where the — are you driving to, sir?" cried I, as a fellow with a brass-bound trunk in a hand-barrow came smash against my shin.

"Don't you see, sir, the train is just starting?" said he,

hastening on; and I now perceived that such was the case, and that I had barely time to rush down to the pay-office and secure my ticket.

"What class, sir?" cried the clerk.

"Which has she taken?" said I, forgetting all save the current of my own thoughts.

"First or second, sir?" repeated he, impatiently.

"Either, or both," replied I, in confusion; and he flung me back some change and a blue card, closing the little shutter with a bang that announced the end of all colloquy.

"Get in, sir!"

"Which carriage?"

"Get in, sir!"

"Second-class? Here you are!" called out an official, as he thrust me almost rudely into a vile mob of travellers.

The bell rang out, and two snorts and a scream followed, then a heave and a jerk, and away we went. As soon as I had time to look around me, I saw that my companions were all persons of an humble order of the middle class, — the small shopkeepers and traders, probably, of the locality we were leaving. Their easy recognition of each other, and the natural way their conversation took up local matters, soon satisfied me of this fact, and reconciled me to fall back upon my own thoughts for occupation and amusement. This was with me the usual prelude to a sleep, to which I was quietly composing myself soon after. The droppings of the conversation around me, however, prevented this; for the talk had taken a discussional tone, and the differences of opinion were numerous. The question debated was, Whether a certain Sir Samuel Somebody was a great rogue, or only unfortunate? The reasons for either opinion were well put and defended, showing that the company, like most others of that class in life in England, had cultivated their faculties of judgment and investigation by the habit of attending trials or reading reports of them in newspapers.

After the discussion on his morality, came the question, Was he alive or dead?

"Sir Samuel never shot himself, sir," said a short pluffy man with an asthma. "I've known him for years, and I can say he was not a man to do such an act."

"Well, sir, the Ostrich and the United Brethren offices are both of your opinion," said another; "they'll not pay the policy on his life."

"The law only recognizes death on production of the body," sagely observed a man in shabby black, with a satin neckcloth, and whom I afterwards perceived was regarded as a legal authority.

"What's to be done, then, if a man be drowned at sea, or burned to a cinder in a lime-kiln?"

"Ay, or by what they call spontaneous combustion, that does n't leave a shred of you?" cried three objectors in turn.

"The law provides for these emergencies with its usual wisdom, gentlemen. Where death may not be actually proven it can be often inferred."

"But who says that Sir Samuel is dead?" broke in the asthmatic man, evidently impatient at the didactic tone of the attorney. "All we know of the matter is a letter of his own signing, that when these lines are read I shall be no more. Now, is that sufficient evidence of death to induce an insurance company to hand over some eight or ten thousand pounds to his family?"

"I believe you might say thirty thousand, sir," suggested a mild voice from the corner.

"Nothing of the kind," interposed another; "the really heavy policies on his life were held by an old Cumberland baronet, Sir Elkanah Crofton, who first established Whalley in the iron trade. I've heard it from my father fifty times, when a child, that Sam Whalley entered Milford in a fustian jacket, with all his traps in a handkerchief."

At the mention of Sir Elkanah Crofton, my attention was quickly excited; this was the uncle of my friends at the Rosary, and I was at once curious to hear more of him.

"Fustian jacket or not, he had a good head on his shoulders," remarked one.

"And luck, sir; luck, which is better than any head," sighed the meek man, sorrowfully.

"I deny that, deny it totally," broke in he of the asthma.

"If Sam Whalley had n't been a man of first-rate order, he never could have made that concern what it was, — the first foundry in Wales."

"And what is it now, and where is he?" asked the attorney, triumphantly.

"At rest, I hope," murmured the sad man.

"Not a bit of it, sir," said the wheezing voice, in a tone of confidence; "take *my* word for it, he's alive and hearty, somewhere or other, ay, and we'll hear of him one of these days: he'll be smelting metals in Africa, or cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Heaven knows what, or prime minister of one of those rajahs in India. He's a clever dog, and he knows it too. I saw what he thought of himself the day old Sir Elkanah came down to Fairbridge."

"To be sure, you were there that morning," said the attorney; "tell us about that meeting."

"It's soon told," resumed the other. "When Sir Elkanah Crofton arrived at the house, we were all in the garden. Sir Samuel had taken me there to see some tulips, which he said were the finest in Europe, except some at the Hague. Maybe it was that the old baronet was vexed at seeing nobody come to meet him, or that something else had crossed him, but as he entered the garden I saw he was sorely out of temper."

"How d'ye do, Sir Elkanah?" said Whalley to him, coming up pleasantly. "We scarcely expected you before dinner-time. My wife and my daughters," said he, introducing them; but the other only removed his hat ceremoniously, without ever noticing them in the least.

"I hope you had a pleasant journey, Sir Elkanah?" said Whalley, after a pause, while, with a short jerk of his head, he made signs to the ladies to leave them.

"I trust I am not the means of breaking up a family party?" said the other, half sarcastically. "Is Mrs. Whalley—"

"Lady Whalley, with your good permission, sir," said Samuel, stiffly.

"Of course; how stupid of me! I should remember you had been knighted. And, indeed, the thought was full upon me as I came along, for I scarcely suppose that if higher ambitions had not possessed you, I should find the farm buildings and the outhouse in the state of ruin I see them."

"They are better by ten thousand pounds than the day

on which I first saw them; and I say it in the presence of this honest townsman here, my neighbor,' — meaning *me*, — 'that both *you* and they were very creaky concerns when I took you in hand.'

"I thought the old Baronet was going to have a fit at these words, and he caught hold of my arm and swayed backwards and forwards all the time, his face purple with passion.

" 'Who made you, sir? who made you?' cried he, at last, with a voice trembling with rage.

" 'The same hand that made us all,' said the other, calmly. 'The same wise Providence that, for his own ends, creates drones as well as bees, and makes rickety old baronets as well as men of brains and industry.'

" 'You shall rue this insolence; it shall cost you dearly, by Heaven!' cried out the old man, as he gripped me tighter. 'You are a witness, sir, to the way I have been insulted. I'll foreclose your mortgage — I'll call in every shilling I have advanced — I'll sell the house over your head —'

" 'Ay! but the head without a roof over it will hold itself higher than your own, old man. The good faculties and good health God has given me are worth all your title-deeds twice told. If I walk out of this town as poor as the day I came into it, I'll go with the calm certainty that I can earn my bread, — a process that would be very difficult for *you* when you could not lend out money on interest.'

" 'Give me your arm, sir, back to the town,' said the old Baronet to me; 'I feel myself too ill to go all alone.'

" 'Get him to step into the house and take something,' whispered Whalley in my ear, as he turned away and left us. But I was afraid to propose it; indeed, if I had, I believe the old man would have had a fit on the spot, for he trembled from head to foot, and drew long sighs, as if recovering out of a faint.

" 'Is there an inn near this,' asked he, 'where I can stop? and have you a doctor here?'

" 'You can have both, Sir Elkanah,' said I.

" 'You know me, then? — you know who I am?' said he, hastily, as I called him by his name.

" 'That I do, sir, and I hold my place under you; my name is Shore.'

" ' Yes, I remember, ' said he, vaguely, as he moved away. When we came to the gate on the road he turned around full and looked at the house, overgrown with that rich red creeper that was so much admired. ' Mark my words, my good man, ' said he, — ' mark them well, and as sure as I live, I 'll not leave one stone on another of that dwelling there. ' "

" He was promising more than he could perform, " said the attorney.

" I don't know that, " sighed the meek man; " there 's very little that money can't do in this life. "

" And what has become of Whalley's widow, — if she be a widow? " asked one.

" She 's in a poor way. She 's up at the village yonder, and, with the help of one of her girls, she 's trying to keep a children's school. "

" Lady Whalley's school? " exclaimed one, in half sarcasm.

" Yes; but she has taken her maiden name again since this disaster, and calls herself Mrs. Herbert. "

" Has she more than one daughter, sir? " I asked of the last speaker.

" Yes, there are two girls; the younger one, they tell me, is going, or gone abroad, to take some situation or other, — a teacher, or a governess. "

" No, sir, " said the pluffy man, " Miss Kate has gone as companion to an old widow lady at Brussels, — Mrs. Keats. I saw the letter that arranged the terms, — a trifle less per annum than her mother gave to her maid. "

" Poor girl! " sighed the sad man. " It 's a dreary way to begin life! "

I nodded assentingly to him, and with a smile of gratitude for his sympathy. Indeed, the sentiment had linked me to him, and made me wish to be beside him. The conversation now grew discursive, on the score of all the difficulties that beset women when reduced to make efforts for their own support; and though the speakers were men well able to understand and pronounce upon the knotty problem, the subject did not possess interest enough to turn my mind from the details I had just been hearing. The name of Miss Herbert on the trunks showed me now who was the young

lady I had met, and I reproached myself bitterly with having separated from her, and thus forfeited the occasion of befriending her on her journey. We were to sup somewhere about eleven, and I resolved that I would do my utmost to discover her, if in the train; and I occupied myself now with imagining numerous pretexts for presuming to offer my services on her behalf. She will readily comprehend the disinterested character of my attentions. She will see that I come in no spirit of levity, but moved by a true sympathy and the respectful sentiment of one touched by her sorrows. I can fancy her coy diffidence giving way before the deferential homage of my manner; and in this I really believe I have some tact. I was not sorry to pursue this theme undisturbed by the presence of my fellow-travellers, who had now got out at a station, leaving me all alone to meditate and devise imaginary conversations with Miss Herbert. I rehearsed to myself the words by which to address her, my bow, my gesture, my faint smile, a blending of melancholy with kindness, my whole air a union of the deference of the stranger with something almost fraternal. These pleasant musings were now rudely routed by the return of my fellow-travellers, who came hurrying back to their places at the banging summons of a great bell.

"Everything cold, as usual. It is a perfect disgrace how the public are treated on this line!" cried one.

"I never think of anything but a biscuit and a glass of ale, and they charged me elevenpence halfpenny for that."

"The directors ought to look to this. I saw those ham-sandwiches when I came down here last Tuesday week."

"And though the time-table gives us fifteen minutes, I can swear, for I laid my watch on the table, that we only got nine and a half."

"Well, I supped heartily off that spiced round."

"Supped, supped! Did you say you had supped here, sir?" asked I, in anxiety.

"Yes, sir; that last station was Trentham. They give us nothing more now till we reach town."

I lay back with a faint sigh, and, from that moment, took no note of time till the guard cried "London!"

CHAPTER X.

THE PERILS OF MY JOURNEY TO OSTEND.

"YOUNG lady in deep mourning, sir, — crape shawl and bonnet, sir," said the official, in answer to my question, aided by a shilling fee; "the same as asked where was the station for the Dover Line."

"Yes, yes; that must be she."

"Got into a cab, sir, and drove off straight for the South-Eastern."

"She was quite alone?"

"Quite, sir; but she seems used to travelling, — got her traps together in no time, and was off in a jiffy."

"Stupid dog!" thought I; "with every advantage position and accident can confer, how little this fellow reads of character! In this poor, forlorn, heart-weary orphan, he only sees something like a commercial traveller!"

"Any luggage, sir? Is this yours?" said he, pointing to a woolsack.

"No," said I, haughtily; "my servants have gone forward with my luggage. I have nothing but a knapsack." And with an air of dignity I flung it into a hansom, and ordered the driver to set me down at the South-Eastern. Although using every exertion, the train had just started when I arrived, and a second time was I obliged to wait some hours at a station. Resolving to free myself from all the captivations of that tendency to day-dreaming, — that fatal habit of suffering my fancy to direct my steps, as though in pursuit of some settled purpose, — I calmly asked myself whither I was going — and for what? Before I had begun the examination, I deemed myself a most candid, truth-observing, frank witness, and now I discovered that I was casuistical and "dodgy" as an Old Bailey lawyer. I was

haughty and indignant at being so catechised. My conscience, on the shallow pretext of being greatly interested about me, was simply prying and inquisitive. Conscience is all very well when one desires to appeal to it, and refer some distinct motive or action to its appreciation; but it is scarcely fair, and certainly not dignified, for conscience to go about seeking for little accusations of this kind or that. What liberty of action is there, besides, to a man who carries a "detective" with him wherever he goes? And lastly, conscience has the intolerable habit of obtruding its opinion upon details, and will not wait to judge by results. Now, when I have won the race, come in first, amid the enthusiastic cheers of thousands, I don't care to be asked, however privately, whether I did not practise some little bit of rather unfair jockeyship. I never could rightly get over my dislike to the friend who would take this liberty with me; and this is exactly the part conscience plays, and with an insufferable air of superiority, too, as though to say, "None of your shuffling with *me*, Potts! That will do all mighty well with the outer world, but *I* am not to be humbugged. You never devised a scheme in your life that I was not by at the cookery, and saw how you mixed the ingredients and stirred the pot! No, no, old fellow, all your little secret rogueries will avail you nothing here!"

Had these words been actually addressed to me by a living individual, I could not have heard them more plainly than now they fell upon my ear, uttered, besides, in a tone of cutting, sarcastic derision. "I will stand this no longer!" cried I, springing up from my seat and flinging my cigar angrily away. "I'm certain no man ever accomplished any high and great destiny in life who suffered himself to be bullied in this wise; such irritating, pestering impertinence would destroy the temper of a saint, and break down the courage and damp the ardor of the boldest. Could great measures of statecraft be carried out — could battles be won — could new continents be discovered, if at every strait and every emergency one was to be interrupted by a low voice, whispering, 'Is this *all* right? Are there no flaws here? You live in a world of frailties, Potts. You are playing at a round game, where every one cheats a little, and where the

rogueries are never remembered against him who wins. Bear that in your mind, and keep your cards "up." "

When I was about to take my ticket, a dictum of the great moralist struck my mind: "Desultory reading has slain its thousands and tens of thousands;" and if desultory reading, why not infinitely more so desultory acquaintance? Surely, our readings do not impress us as powerfully as the actual intercourse of life. It must be so. It is in this daily conflict with our fellow-men that we are moulded and fashioned; and the danger is, to commingle and confuse the impressions made upon our hearts, to cross the writing on our natures so often that nothing remains legible! "I will guard against this peril," thought I. "I will concentrate my intentions and travel alone." I slipped a crown into a guard's hand, and whispered, "Put no one in here if you can help it." As I jogged along, all by myself, I could not help feeling that one of the highest privileges of wealth must be to be able always to buy solitude,—to be in a position to say, "None shall invade me. The world must contrive to go round without a kick from *me*. I am a self-contained and self-suffering creature." If I were Rothschild, I'd revel in this sentiment; it places one so immeasurably above that busy ant-hill where one sees the creatures hurrying, hastening, and fagging "till their hearts are broken." One feels himself a superior intelligence, — a being above the wants and cares of the work-a-day world around him.

"Any room here?" cried a merry voice, breaking in upon my musing; and at the same instant a young fellow, in a gray travelling-suit and a wideawake, flung a dressing-bag and a wrapper carelessly into the carriage, and so recklessly as to come tumbling over me. He never thought of apology, however, but continued his remarks to the guard, who was evidently endeavoring to induce him to take a place elsewhere. "No, no!" cried the young man; "I'm all right here, and the cove with the yellow hair won't object to my smoking."

I heard these words as I sat in the corner, and I need scarcely say how grossly the impertinence offended me. That the privacy I had paid for should be invaded was bad enough, but that my companion should begin acquaintance

with an insult was worse again; and so I determined on no account, nor upon any pretext, would I hold intercourse with him, but maintain a perfect silence and reserve so long as our journey lasted.

There was an insufferable jauntiness and self-satisfaction in every movement of the new arrival, even to the reckless way he pitched into the carriage three small white canvas bags, carefully sealed and docketed; the address — which I read — being, “To H.M.’s Minister and Envoy at —, by the Hon. Grey Buller, Attaché, &c.” So, then, this was one of the Young Guard of Diplomacy, one of those sucking Talleyrands, which form the hope of the Foreign Office and the terror of middle-class English abroad.

“Do you mind smoking?” asked he, abruptly, as he scraped his lucifer match against the roof of the carriage, showing, by the promptitude of his action, how little he cared for my reply.

“I never smoke, sir, except in the carriages reserved for smokers,” was my rebukeful answer.

“And I always do,” said he, in a very easy tone.

Not condescending to notice this rude rejoinder, I drew forth my newspaper, and tried to occupy myself with its contents.

“Anything new?” asked he, abruptly.

“Not that I am aware, sir. I was about to consult the paper.”

“What paper is it?”

“It is the ‘Banner,’ sir, — at your service,” said I, with a sort of sarcasm.

“Rascally print; a vile, low, radical, mill-owning organ. Pitch it away!”

“Certainly not, sir. Being for *me* and *my* edification, I will beg to exercise my own judgment as to how I deal with it.”

“It’s deuced low, that’s what it is, and that’s exactly the fault of all our daily papers. Their tone is vulgar; they reflect nothing of the opinions one hears in society. Don’t you agree with me?”

I gave a sort of muttering dissent, and he broke in quickly, —

"Perhaps not; it's just as likely *you* would not think them low, but take *my* word for it, *I*'m right."

I shook my head negatively, without speaking.

"Well, now," cried he, "let us put the thing to the test. Read out one of those leaders. I don't care which, or on what subject. Read it out, and I pledge myself to show you at least one vulgarism, one flagrant outrage on good breeding, in every third sentence."

"I protest, sir," said I, haughtily, "I shall do no such thing. I have come here neither to read aloud nor take up the defence of the public press."

"I say, look out!" cried he; "you'll smash something in that bag you're kicking there. If I don't mistake, it's Bohemian glass. No, no; all right," said he, examining the number, "it's only Yarmouth bloaters."

"I imagined these contained despatches, sir," said I, with a look of what he ought to have understood as withering scorn.

"You did, did you?" cried he, with a quick laugh. "Well, I'll bet you a sovereign I make a better guess about *your* pack than you've done about *mine*."

"Done, sir; I take you," said I, quickly.

"Well; you're in cutlery, or hardware, or lace goods, or ribbons, or alpaca cloth, or drugs, ain't you?"

"I am not, sir," was my stern reply.

"Not a bagman?"

"Not a bagman, sir."

"Well, you're an usher in a commercial academy, or 'our own correspondent,' or a telegraph clerk?"

"I'm none of these, sir. And I now beg to remind you, that instead of one guess, you have made about a dozen."

"Well, you've won, there's no denying it," said he, taking a sovereign from his waistcoat-pocket and handing it to me. "It's deuced odd how I should be mistaken. I'd have sworn you were a bagman!" But for the impertinence of these last words I should have declined to accept his lost bet, but I took it now as a sort of vindication of my wounded feelings. "Now it's all over and ended," said he, calmly, "what are you? I don't ask out of any impertinent curiosity, but that I hate being foiled in a thing of this kind. What are you?"

"I'll tell you what I am, sir," said I, indignantly, for now I was outraged beyond endurance, — "I'll tell you, sir, what I am, and what I feel myself, — one singularly unlucky in a travelling-companion."

"Bet you a five-pound note you're not," broke he in. "Give you six to five on it, in anything you like."

"It would be a wager almost impossible to decide, sir."

"Nothing of the kind. Let us leave it to the first pretty woman we see at the station, the guard of the train, the fellow in the pay-office, the stoker if you like."

"I must own, sir, that you express a very confident opinion of your case."

"Will you bet?"

"No, sir, certainly not."

"Well, then, shut up, and say no more about it. If a man won't back his opinion, the less he says the better."

I lay back in my place at this, determined that no provocation should induce me to exchange another word with him. Apparently, he had not made a like resolve, for he went on: "It's all bosh about appearances being deceptive, and so forth. They say 'not all gold that glitters;' my notion is that with a fellow who really knows life, no disguise that was ever invented will be successful: the way a man wears his hair," — here he looked at mine, — "the sort of gloves he has, if there be anything peculiar in his waistcoat, and, above all, his boots. I don't believe the devil was ever more revealed in his hoof than a snob by his shoes." A most condemnatory glance at my extremities accompanied this speech.

"Must I endure this sort of persecution all the way to Dover?" was the question I asked of my misery.

"Look out, you're on fire!" said he, with a dry laugh. And sure enough, a spark from his cigarette had fallen on my trousers, and burned a round hole in them.

"Really, sir," cried I, in passionate warmth, "your conduct becomes intolerable."

"Well, if I knew you preferred being singed, I'd have said nothing about it. What's this station here? Where's your 'Bradshaw'?"

"I have got no 'Bradshaw,' sir," said I, with dignity.

"No 'Bradshaw'! A bagman without 'Bradshaw'! Oh, I forgot, you ain't a bagman. Why are we stopping here? Something smashed, I suspect. Eh! what! is n't that she? Yes, it is! Open the door! — let me out, I say! Confound the lock! — let me out!" While he uttered these words, in an accent of the wildest impatience, I had but time to see a lady, in deep mourning, pass on to a carriage in front, just as, with a preliminary snort, the train shook, then backed, and at last set out on its thundering course again. "Such a stunning fine girl!" said he, as he lighted a fresh cigar; "saw her just as we started, and thought I'd run her to earth in this carriage. Precious mistake I made, eh, was n't it? All in black — deep black — and quite alone!"

I had to turn towards the window not to let him perceive how his words agitated me, for I felt certain it was Miss Herbert he was describing, and I felt a sort of revulsion to think of the poor girl being subjected to the impertinence of this intolerable puppy.

"Too much style about her for a governess; and yet, somehow, she was n't, so to say — you know what I mean — she was n't altogether *that*; looked frightened, and people of real class never look frightened."

"The daughter of a clergyman, probably," said I, with a tone of such reproof as I hoped must check all levity.

"Or a flash maid! some of them, nowadays, are wonderful swells; they've got an art of dressing and making-up that is really surprising."

"I have no experience of the order, sir," said I, gravely.

"Well, so I should say. *Your* beat is in the haberdashery or hosiery line, eh?"

"Has it not yet occurred to you, sir," asked I, sternly, "that an acquaintanceship brief as ours should exclude personalities, not to say —" I wanted to add "impertinences;" but his gray eyes were turned full on me, with an expression so peculiar that I faltered, and could not get the word out.

"Well, go on, — out with it: not to say what?" said he, calmly.

I turned my shoulder towards him, and nestled down into my place.

"There's a thing, now," said he, in a tone of the coolest

reflection, — “there’s a thing, now, that I never could understand, and I have never met the man to explain it. Our nation, as a nation, is just as plucky as the French, — no one disputes it; and yet take a Frenchman of *your* class, — the *commis-voyageur*, or anything that way, — and you’ll just find him as prompt on the point of honor as the best noble in the land. He never utters an insolent speech without being ready to back it.”

I felt as if I were choking, but I never uttered a word.

“I remember meeting one of those fellows — traveller for some house in the wine trade — at Avignon. It was at *table d’hôte*, and I said something slighting about Communism, and he replied, ‘*Monsieur, je suis Fouriériste*, and you insult me.’ Thereupon he sent me his card by the waiter, — ‘Paul Deloge, for the house of Gougou, *père et fils*.’ I tore it, and threw it away, saying, ‘I never drink Bordeaux wines.’ ‘What do you say to a glass of Hermitage, then?’ said he, and flung the contents of his own in my face. Wasn’t that very ready? I call it as neat a thing as could be.”

“And you bore that outrage,” said I, in triumphant delight; “you submitted to a flagrant insult like that at a public table?”

“I don’t know what you call ‘bearing it,’” said he; “the thing was done, and I had only to wipe my face with my napkin.”

“Nothing more?” said I, sneeringly.

“We went out, afterwards, if you mean *that*,” said he, quietly, “and he ran me through here.” As he spoke, he proceeded, in leisurely fashion, to unbutton the wrist of his shirt, and, baring his arm midway, showed me a pinkish cicatrice of considerable extent. “It went, the doctor said, within a hair’s-breadth of the artery.”

I made no comment upon this story. From the moment I heard it, I felt as though I was travelling with the late Mr. Palmer, of Rugeley. I was as it were in the company of one who never would have scrupled to dispose of me, at any moment and in any way that his fancy suggested. My code respecting the duel was to regard it as the last, the very last, appeal in the direst emergency of dishonor. The

men who regarded it as the settlement of slight differences, I deemed assassins. They were no more safe associates for peaceful citizens than a wolf was a meet companion for a flock of South Downs. The more I ruminated on this theme, the more indignant grew my resentment, and the question assumed the shape of asking, "Is the great mass of mankind to be hectorred and bullied by some half-dozen scoundrels with skill at the small sword?" Little knew I that in the ardor of my indignation I had uttered these words aloud, —spoken them with an earnest vehemence, looking my fellow-traveller full in the face, and frowning.

"Scoundrel is strong, eh?" said he, slowly; "*very* strong!"

"Who spoke of a scoundrel?" asked I, in terror, for his confounded calm, cold manner made my very blood run chilled.

"Scoundrel is exactly the sort of word," added he, deliberately, "that once uttered can only be expiated in one way. You do not give me the impression of a very bright individual, but certainly you can understand so much."

I bowed a dignified assent; my heart was in my mouth as I did it, and I could not, to save my life, have uttered a word. My predicament was highly perilous; and all incurred by what?—that passion for adventure that had led me forth out of a position of easy obscurity into a world of strife, conflict, and difficulty. Why had I not stayed at home? What foolish infatuation had ever suggested to me the Quixotism of these wanderings? Blondel had done it all. Were it not for Blondel, I had never met. Father Dyke, talked myself into a stupid wager, lost what was not my own; in fact, every disaster sprang out of the one before it, just as twig adheres to branch and branch to trunk. Shall I make a clean breast of it, and tell my companion my whole story? Shall I explain to him that at heart I am a creature of the kindest impulses and most generous sympathies, that I overflow with good intentions towards my fellows, and that the problem I am engaged to solve is how shall I dispense most happiness? Will he comprehend me? Has he a nature to appreciate an organization

so fine and subtle as mine? Will he understand that the fairy who endows us with our gifts at birth is reckoned to be munificent when she withholds only one high quality, and with me that one was courage? I mean the coarse, vulgar, combative sort of courage that makes men prize-fighters and bargees; for as to the grander species of courage, I imagine it to be my distinguishing feature.

The question is, will he give me a patient hearing, for my theory requires nice handling, and some delicacy in the developing? He may cut me short in his bluff, abrupt way, and say, "Out with it, old fellow, you want to sneak out of this quarrel." What am I to reply? I shall rejoin: "Sir, let us first inquire if it be a quarrel. From the time of Atrides down to the Crimean war, there has not been one instance of a conflict that did not originate in misconceptions, and has not been prolonged by delusions! Let us take the Peloponnesian war." A short grunt beside me here cut short my argumentation. He was fast, sound asleep, and snoring loudly. My thoughts at once suggested escape. Could I but get away, I fancied I could find space in the world, never again to see myself his neighbor.

The train was whirling along between deep chalk cuttings, and at a furious pace; to leap out was certain death. But was not the same fate reserved for me if I remained? At last I heard the crank-crank of the break! We were nearing a station; the earth walls at either side receded; the view opened; a spire of a church, trees, houses appeared; and, our speed diminishing, we came bumping, throbbing, and snorting into a little trim garden-like spot, that at the moment seemed to me a paradise.

I beckoned to the guard to let me out, — to do it noiselessly I slipped a shilling into his hand. I grasped my knapsack and my wrapper, and stole furtively away. Oh, the happiness of that moment as the door closed without awakening him!

"Anywhere — any carriage — what class you please," muttered I. "There, yonder," broke I in, hastily, — "where that lady in mourning has just got in."

"All full there, sir," replied the man; "step in here." And away we went.

My compartment contained but one passenger; he wore a gold band round his oil-skin cap, and seemed the captain of a mail steamer, or Admiralty agent; he merely glanced at me as I came in, and went on reading his newspaper.

"Going north, I suppose?" said he, bluntly, after a pause of some time. "Going to Germany?"

"No" said I, rather astonished at his giving me this destination. "I'm for Brussels."

"We shall have a rough night of it, outside; glass is falling suddenly, and the wind has chopped round to the south'ard and east'ard!"

"I'm sorry for it," said I. "I'm but an indifferent sailor."

"Well, I'll tell you what to do: just turn into my cabin; you'll have it all to yourself; lie down flat on your back the moment you get aboard; tell the steward to give you a strong glass of brandy-and-water — the captain's brandy say, for it is rare old stuff, and a perfect cordial, and my name ain't Slidders if you don't sleep all the way across."

I really had no words for such unexpected generosity; how was I to believe my ears at such a kind proposal of a perfect stranger? Was it anything in my appearance that could have marked me out as an object for these attentions? "I don't know how to thank you enough," said I, in confusion; "and when I think that we meet now for the first time —"

"What does that signify?" said he, in the same short way. "I've met pretty nigh all of you by this time. I've been a matter of eleven years on this station!"

"Met pretty nigh all of us!" What does that mean? Who and what are we? He can't mean the Pottses, for I'm the first who ever travelled even thus far! But I was not given leisure to follow up the inquiry, for he went on to say how in all that time of eleven years he had never seen threatenings of a worse night than that before us.

"Then why venture out?" asked I, timidly.

"They must have the bags over there; that's the reason," said he, curtly: "besides, who's to say when he won't meet dirty weather at sea, — one takes rough and smooth in this life, eh?"

The observation was not remarkable for originality, but I liked it. I like the reflective turn, no matter how beaten the path it may select for its exercise.

"It's a short trip, — some five or six hours at most," said he; "but it's wonderful what ugly weather one sees in it. It's always so in these narrow seas."

"Yes," said I, concurringly, "these petty channels, like the small events of our life, are often the sources of our greatest perils."

He gave a little short grunt: it might have been assent, and it might possibly have been a rough protest against further moralizing; at all events, he resumed his paper, and read away without speaking. I had time to examine him well, now, at my leisure, and there was nothing in his face that could give me any clew to the generous nature of his offer to me. No, he was a hard-featured, weather-beaten, rather stern sort of man, verging on fifty seven or eight. He looked neither impulsive nor confiding, and there was in the shape of his mouth, and the curve of the lines around it, that peremptory and almost cruel decision that marks the sea-captain. "Well," thought I, "I must seek the explanation of the riddle elsewhere. The secret sympathy that moved him must have its root in *me*; and, after all, history has never told that the dolphins who were charmed by Orpheus were peculiar dolphins, with any special fondness for music, or an ear for melody; they were ordinary creatures of the deep, — fish, so to say, taken *ex-medio acervo* of delphinity. The marvel of their captivation lay in the spell of the enchanter. It was the thrilling touch of *his* fingers, the tasteful elegance of *his* style, the voluptuous intralment of the sounds *he* awakened, that worked the miracle. This man of the sea has, therefore, been struck by something in my air, bearing, or address; one of those mysterious sympathies which are the hidden motives that guide half our lives, had drawn him to me, and he said to himself, 'I like that man. I have met more pretentious people, I have seen persons who desire to dominate and impose more than he, but there is that about him that somehow appeals to the instincts of my nature, and I can say I feel myself his friend already.'"

As I worked at my little theory, with all the ingenuity I knew how to employ on such occasions, I perceived that he had put up his newspaper, and was gathering together, in old traveller fashion, the odds and ends of his baggage.

"Here we are," said he, as we glided into the station, "and in capital time too. Don't trouble yourself about your traps. My steward will be here presently, and take all your things down to the packet along with my own. Our steam is up; so lose no time in getting aboard."

I had never less inclination to play the loiterer. The odious *attaché* was still in my neighborhood, and until I had got clear out of his reach I felt anything but security. *He*, I remembered, was for Calais, so that, by taking the Ostend boat, I was at once separating myself from his detestable companionship. I not only, therefore, accepted the captain's offer to leave all my effects to the charge of the steward; but no sooner had the train stopped, than I sprang out, hastened through the thronged station, and made at all my speed for the harbor.

Is it to increase the impediments to quitting one's country, and, by interposing difficulties, to give the exile additional occasion to think twice about expatriating himself, that the way from the railroad to the dock at Dover is made so circuitous and almost impossible to discover? Are these obstacles invented in the spirit of those official details which make banns on the church-door, and a delay of three weeks precede a marriage, as though to say, Halt, impetuous youth, and bethink you whither you are going? Are these amongst the wise precautions of a truly paternal rule? If so, they must occasionally even transcend the original intention, for when I reached the pier, the packet had already begun to move, and it was only by a vigorous leap that I gained the paddle-box, and thus scrambled on board.

"Like every one of you," growled out my weather-beaten friend; "always within an ace of being left behind."

"Every one of us!" muttered I. "What can he have known of the Potts family, that he dares to describe us thus characteristically? And who ever presumed to call us loiterers or sluggards?"

"Step down below, as I told you," whispered he. "It's

a dirty night, and we shall have bucketing weather outside." And with this friendly hint I at once complied, and stole down the ladder. "Show that gentleman into my state-room, steward," called he out from above. "Mix him something warm, and look after him."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the brisk reply, as the bustling man of brandy and basins threw open a small door, and ushered me into a little den, with a mingled odor of tar, Stilton, and wet mackintoshes. "All to yourself here, sir," said he, and vanished.

CHAPTER XI.

A JEALOUS HUSBAND.

I TAKE it for granted that all special "charities" have had their origin in some specific suffering. At least, I can aver that my first thought on landing at Ostend was, "Why has no great philanthropist thought of establishing such an institution as a Refuge for the Sea-sick?" I declare this publicly, that if I ever become rich, — a consummation which, looking to the general gentleness of my instincts, the wide benevolence of my nature, and the kindliness of my temperament, mankind might well rejoice at, — if, I repeat, I ever become rich, one of the first uses of my affluence will be to endow such an establishment. I will place it in some one of our popular ports, say Southampton. Surrounded with all the charms of inland scenery, rich in every rustic association, the patient shall never be reminded of the scene of his late sufferings. A velvety turf to stroll on, with a leafy shade above his head, the mellow lowing of cattle in his ears, and the fragrant odors of meadow-sweet and hawthorn around, I would recall the sufferer from the dread memories of the slippery deck, the sea-washed stairs, or the sleepy state-room. For the rattle of cordage, and the hoarse trumpet of the skipper, I would substitute the song of the thrush or the blackbird; and, instead of the thrice odious steward and his basin, I would have trim maidens of pleasing aspect to serve him with syllabubs. I will not go on to say the hundred devices I would employ to cheat memory out of a gloomy record, for I treasure the hope that I may yet live to carry out my theory, and have a copyright in my invention.

It was with sentiments deeply tinged by the above that I tottered, rather than walked, towards the "Hôtel Royal." It was a bright moonlight night, and, as if in mockery of the

weather outside, as still and calm as might be. Many a picturesque effect of light and shade met me as I went: quaint old gables flaring in a strong flood of moonlight, showed outlines the strangest and oddest; twinkling lamps shone out of tall, dark-sided, old houses, from which strains of music came plaintively enough in the night air; the sounds of a prolonged revel rose loudly out of that deep-pillared chateau-like building in the Place, and in the quiet alley adjoining, I could catch the low song of a mother as she tried to sing her baby to sleep. It was all human in every touch and strain of it. And did I not drink it in with rapture? Was it not in a transport of gratitude that I thanked Fortune for once again restoring me to land? "O Earth, Earth!" says the Greek poet, "how art thou interwoven with that nature that first came from thee!" Thus musing, I reached the inn, where, though the hour was a late one, the household was all active and astir.

"Many passengers arrived, waiter?" said I, in the easy, careless voice of one who would not own to sea-sickness.

"Very few, sir; the severe weather has deterred several from venturing across."

"Any ladies?"

"Only one, sir; and, poor thing! she seems to have suffered fearfully. She had to be carried from the boat, and when she tried to walk upstairs, she almost fainted. There might have been some agitation, however, in that, for she expected some one to have met her here; and when she heard that he had not arrived, she was completely overcome."

"Very sad, indeed," said I, examining the *carte* for supper.

"Oh yes, sir; and being in deep mourning, too, and a stranger away for the first time from her country."

I started, and felt my heart bounding against my side.

"What was it you said about deep mourning, and being young and beautiful?" asked I, eagerly.

"Only the mourning, sir, — it was only the mourning I mentioned; for she kept her veil close down, and would not suffer her face to be seen."

"Bashful as beautiful! modest as she is fair!" muttered I. "Do you happen to know whither she is going?"

"Yes, sir; her luggage is marked 'Brussels.'"

"It is she! It is herself!" cried I, in rapture, as I turned away, lest the fellow should notice my emotion. "When does she leave this?"

"She seems doubtful, sir; she told the landlady that she is going to reside at Brussels; but never having been abroad before, she is naturally timid about travelling even so far alone."

"Gentle creature! why should she be exposed to such hazards? Bring me some of this fricandeau with chiccory, waiter, and a pint of Beaune; fried potatoes too. — Would that I could tell her to fear nothing!" thought I. "Would that I could just whisper, 'Potts is here; Potts watches over you; Potts will be that friend, that brother, that should have come to meet you! Sleep soundly, and with a head at ease. You are neither friendless nor forsaken!'" I feel I must be naturally a creature of benevolent instincts; for I am never so truly happy as when engaged in a work of kindness. Let me but suggest to myself a labor of charity, some occasion to sorrow with the afflicted, to rally the weak-hearted, and to succor the wretched, and I am infinitely more delighted than by all the blandishment of what is called "society." Men have their allotted parts in life, just as certain fruits are meet for certain climates. Mine was the grand comforting line. Nature meant me for a consoler. I have none of those impulsive temperaments which make what are called jolly fellows. I have no taste for those excesses which go by the name of conviviality. I can, it is true, be witty, anecdotic, and agreeable; I can spice conversation with epigram, and illustrate argument by apt example; but my forte is tenderness.

"Is not this veal a little tough, waiter?" said I, in gentle remonstrance.

"Monsieur is right," said he, bowing; "but if a morsel of cold pheasant would be acceptable—mademoiselle, the lady in mourning, has just taken a wing of it—"

"Bring it directly. — Oh, ecstasy of ecstasies! We are then, as it were, supping together—served from the same dish! — May I have the honor?" said I, filling out a glass of wine and bowing respectfully and with an air of deep

devotion across the table. The pheasant was exquisite, and I ate with an epicurean enjoyment. I called for another pint of Beaune too. It was an occasion for some indulgence, and I could not deny myself. No sooner had the waiter left me alone, than I burst into an expansive acknowledgment of my happiness. "Yes, Potts," said I, "you are richer in that temperament of yours than if you owned half California. That boundless wealth of good intentions is a well no pumping can exhaust. Go on doing imaginary good forever. You are never the poorer for all the orphans you support, all the distresses you relieve. You rescue the mariner from shipwreck without wetting your feet. You charge at the head of a squadron without the peril of a scratch. All blessed be the gift which can do these things!"

You call these delusions; but is it a delusion to be a king, to deliver a people from slavery, to carry succor to a drowning crew? I have done all of these; that is, I have gone through every changeable mood of hope and fear that accompanies these actions, sipping my glass of Beaune between whiles.

When I found myself in my bedroom I had no inclination for sleep; I was in a mood of enjoyment too elevated for mere repose. It was so delightful to be no longer at sea, to feel rescued from the miseries of the rocking ship and the reeking cabin, that I would not lose the rapture of forgetfulness. I was in the mood for great things, too, if I only knew what they were to be. "Ah!" thought I, suddenly, "I will write to *her*. She shall know that she is not the friendless and forsaken creature that she deems herself; she shall hear that, though separated from home, friends, and country, there is one near to watch over and protect her, and that Potts devotes himself to her service." I opened my desk, and in all the impatience of my ardor began:—

"DEAR MADAM,— Quære: Ought I to say 'dear'? We are not acquainted, and can I presume upon the formula that implies acquaintanceship? No. I must omit 'dear;' and then 'madam' looks fearfully stern and rigid, particularly when addressed to a young unmarried lady; she is certainly not 'madam' yet, surely. I can't begin 'miss.' What a language is ours! How cruelly fatal to all the tenderer emotions is a dialect so matter-of-fact and formal!

If I could only start with 'Gentilissima Signora,' how I could get on! What an impulse would the words lend me! What 'way on me' would they impart for what was to follow! In our cast-metal tongue there is nothing for it but the third person: 'The undersigned has the honor,' &c., &c. This is chilling—it is positively repulsive. Let me see, will this do?—

"The gentleman who was fortunate enough to render you some trivial service at the Milford station two days ago, having accidentally learned that you are here and unprovided with a protector, in all humility offers himself to afford you every aid and counsel in his power. No stranger to the touching interest of your life, deeply sensible of the delicacy that should surround your steps, if you deign to accept his devoted services, he will endeavor to prove himself, by every sentiment of respect, your most faithful, most humble, and most grateful servant.

"P. S. His name is Potts."

"Yes, all will do but the confounded postscript. What a terrible bathos, — 'His name is Potts'! What if I say, 'One word of reply is requested, addressed to Algernon Sydney Pottinger, at this hotel'?"

I made a great many copies of this document, always changing something as I went. I felt the importance of every word, and fastidiously pondered over each expression I employed. The bright sun of morning broke in at last upon my labors and found me still at my desk, still composing. All done, I lay down and slept soundly.

"Is she gone, waiter?" said I, as he entered my room with hot water. "Is she gone?"

"Who, sir?" asked he, in some astonishment.

"The lady in black, who came over in the last mail-packet from Dover; the young lady in deep mourning, who arrived all alone."

"No, sir. She has sent all round the hotels this morning to inquire after some one who was to have met her here, but, apparently, without success."

"Give her this; place it in her own hand, and, as you are leaving the room, say, in a gentle voice: 'Is there an answer, mademoiselle?' You understand?"

"Well, I believe I do," said he, significantly, as he slyly pocketed the half-Napoleon fee I had tendered for his acceptance.

Now the fellow had thrown into his countenance — a painfully astute and cunning face it was — one of those expressive looks which actually made me shudder. It seemed to say, "This is a conspiracy, and we are both in it."

"You are not for a moment to suppose," said I, hurriedly, "that there is one syllable in that letter which could compromise *me*, or wound the delicacy of the most susceptible."

"I am convinced that monsieur has written it with most consummate skill," said he, with a supercilious grin, and left the room.

How I detest the familiarity of a foreign waiter! The fellows cannot respond to the most ordinary question without an affectation of showing off their immense acuteness and knowledge of life. It is their eternal boast how they read people, and with what an instinctive subtlety they can decipher all the various characters that pass before them. Now this impertinent lackey, who is to say what has he not imputed to me? Utterly incapable as such a creature must necessarily be of the higher and nobler motives that sway men of my order, he will doubtless have ascribed to me the most base and degenerate motives.

I was wrong in speaking one word to the fellow. I might have said, "Take that note to Number Fourteen, and ask if there be an answer;" or, better still, if I had never written at all, but merely sent in my card to ask if the lady would vouchsafe to accord me an audience of a few minutes. Yes, such would have been the discreet course; and then I might have trusted to my manner, my tact, and a certain something in my general bearing, to have brought the matter to a successful issue. While I thus meditated, the waiter re-entered the room, and, cautiously closing the door, approached me with an ostentatious pretence of secrecy and mystery.

"I have given her the letter," said he, in a whisper.

"Speak up!" said I, severely; "what answer has the lady given?"

"I think you'll get the answer presently," said he, with a sort of grin that actually thrilled through me.

"You may leave the room," said I, with dignity, for I saw how the fellow was actually revelling in the enjoyment of my confusion.

"They were reading it over together for the third time when I came away," said he, with a most peculiar look.

"Whom do you mean? Who are they that you speak of?"

"The gentleman that she was expecting. He came by the 9.40 train from Brussels. Just in time for your note." As the wretch uttered these words, a violent ringing of bells resounded along the corridor, and he rushed out without waiting for more.

I turned in haste to my note-book; various copies of my letter were there, and I was eager to recall the expressions I had employed in addressing her. Good heavens! what had I really written? Here were scraps of all sorts of absurdity; poetry, too! verses to the "Fair Victim of a Recent War," with a number of rhymes for the last word, such as "low," "snow," "mow," &c., — all evidences of composition under difficulty.

While I turned over these rough copies, the door opened, and a large, red-faced, stern-looking man, in a suit of red-brown tweed, and with a heavy stick in his hand, entered; he closed the door leisurely after him, and I half thought that I saw him also turn the key in the lock. He advanced towards me with a deliberate step, and, in a voice measured as his gait, said, —

"I am Mr. Jopplyn, sir, — I am Mr. Christopher Jopplyn."

"I am charmed to hear it, sir," said I, in some confusion, for, without the vaguest conception of wherefore, I suspected lowering weather ahead.

"May I offer you a chair, Mr. Jopplyn? Won't you be seated? We are going to have a lovely day, I fancy, — a great change after yesterday."

"Your name, sir," said he, in the same solemnity as before, — "your name I apprehend to be Porringer?"

"Pottinger, if you permit me; Pottinger, not Porringer."

"It shall be as you say, sir; I am indifferent what you call yourself." He heaved something that sounded like a hoarse sigh, and proceeded: "I have come to settle a small account that stands between us. Is that document your writing?" As he said this, he drew, rather theatrically, from his breast-pocket the letter I had just written, and extended it towards me. "I ask, sir, — and I mean you to

understand that I will suffer no prevarication, — is that document in your writing?"

I trembled all over as I took it, and for an instant I determined to disavow it; but in the same brief space I thought me that my denial would be in vain. I then tried to look boldly, and brazen it out; I fancied to laugh it off as a mere pleasantry, and, failing in courage for each of these, I essayed, as a last resource, the argumentative and discus-sional line, and said, —

"If you will favor me with an indulgent hearing for a few minutes, Mr. Jopplyn, I trust to explain to your complete satisfaction the circumstances of that epistle."

"Take five, sir, — five," said he, laying a ponderous silver watch on the table as he spoke, and pointing to the minute-hand.

"Really, sir," said I, stung by the peremptory and dictatorial tone he assumed, "I have yet to learn that intercourse between gentlemen is to be regulated by clockwork, not to say that I have to inquire by what right you ask me for this explanation."

"One minute gone," said he, solemnly.

"I don't care if there were fifty," said I, passionately. "I disclaim all pretension of a perfect stranger to obtrude himself upon me, and by the mere assumption of a pompous manner and an imposing air, to inquire into my private affairs."

"There are two!" said he, with the same solemnity.

"Who is Mr. Jopplyn, — what is he to me?" cried I, in increased excitement, "that he presents himself in my apartment like a commissary of police? Do you imagine, sir, because I am a young man, that this — this — impertinence" — Lord, what a gulp it cost me! — "is to pass unpunished? Do you fancy that a red beard and a heavy walking-cane are to strike terror into me? You may think, perhaps, that I am unarmed —"

"Three!" said he, with a bang of his stick on the floor that made me actually jump with the stick.

"Leave the room, sir," said I; "it is my pleasure to be alone, — the apartment is mine, — I am the proprietor here. A very little sense of delicacy, a very small amount of good

breeding, might show you, that when a gentleman declines to receive company, when he shows himself indisposed to the society of strangers —”

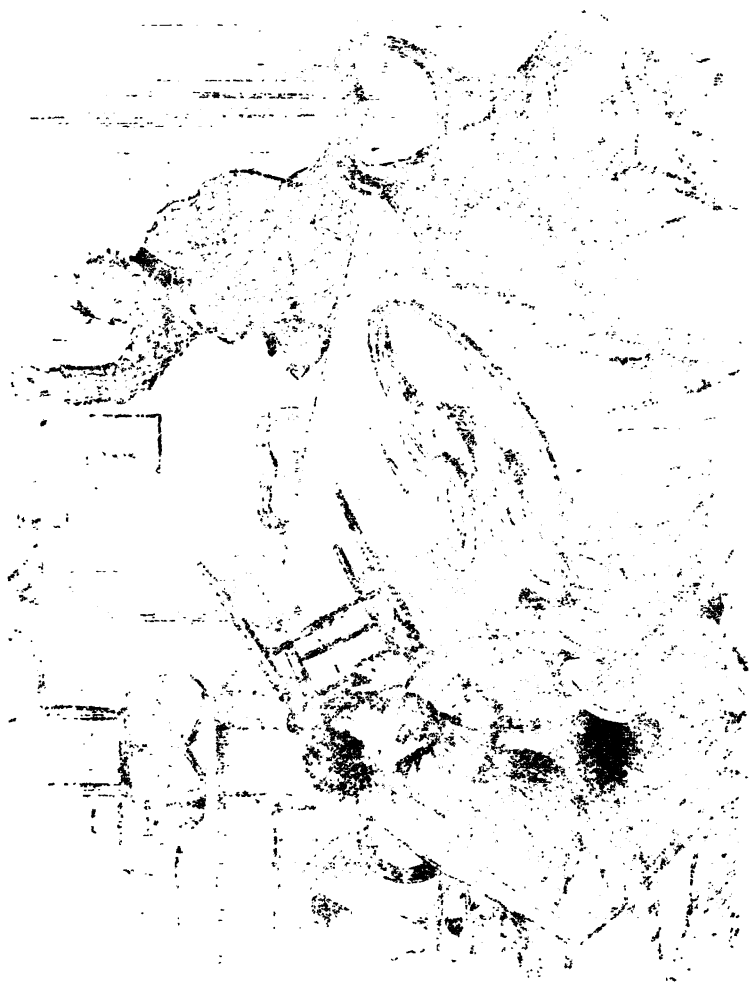
“One minute more, now,” said he, in a low growl; while he proceeded to button up his coat to the neck, and make preparation for some coming event.

My heart was in my mouth; I gave a glance at the window; it was the third story, and a leap out would have been fatal. What would I not have given for one of those weapons I had so proudly proclaimed myself possessed of! There was not even a poker in the room. I made a spring at the bell-rope, and before he could interpose, gave one pull that, though it brought down the cord, resounded through the whole house.

“Time is up, Porringer,” said he, slowly, as he replaced the watch in his pocket, and grasped his murderous-looking cane.

There was a large table in the room, and I intrenched myself at once behind this, armed with a light cane chair, while I screamed murder in every language I could command. Failing to reach me across the table, my assailant tried to dodge me by false starts, now at this side, now at that. Though a large fleshy man, he was not inactive, and it required all my quickness to escape him. These manœuvres being unsuccessful, he very quickly placed a chair beside the table and mounted upon it. I now hurled my chair at him; he warded off the blow and rushed on; with one spring I bounded under the table, reappearing at the opposite side just as he had reached mine. These tactics we now pursued for several minutes, when my enemy suddenly changed his attack, and, descending from the table, he turned it on edge; the effort required strength. I seized the moment and reached the door; I tore it open in some fashion, gained the stairs, the court, the streets, and ran ever onward with the wildness of one possessed with no time for thought, nor any knowledge to guide; I turned left and right, choosing only the narrowest lanes that presented themselves, and at last came to a dead halt at an open draw-bridge, where a crowd stood waiting to pass.

“How is this? What’s all the hurry for? Where are





A jealous husband.



you running this fashion?" cried a well-known voice. I turned, and saw the skipper of the packet.

"Are you armed? Can you defend me?" cried I, in terror; "or shall I leap in and swim for it?"

"I'll stand by you. Don't be afraid, man," said he, drawing my arm within his; "no one shall harm you. Were they robbers?"

"No, worse, — assassins!" said I, gulping, for I was heartily ashamed of my terror, and determined to show "cause why" in the plural.

"Come in here, and have a glass of something," said he, turning into a little cabaret, with whose penetralia he seemed not unfamiliar. "You're all safe here," said he, as he closed the door of a little room. "Let's hear all about it, though I half guess the story already."

I had no difficulty in perceiving, from my companion's manner, that he believed some sudden shock had shaken my faculties, and that my intellects were for the time deranged; nor was it very easy for me to assume sufficient calm to disabuse him of his error, and assert my own perfect coherency. "You have been out for a lark," said he, laughingly. "I see it all. You have been at one of those tea-gardens and got into a row with some stout Fleming. All the young English go through that sort of thing. Ain't I right?"

"Never more mistaken in your life, Captain. My conduct since I landed would not discredit a canon of St. Paul's. In fact, all my habits, my tastes, my instincts, are averse to every sort of junketing. I am essentially retiring, sensitive, and, if you will, over-fastidious in my choice of associates. My story is simply this." My reader will readily excuse my repeating what is already known to him. It is enough if I say that the captain, although anything rather than mirthful, held his hand several times over his face, and once laughed out loudly and boisterously.

"You don't say it was Christy Jopplyn, do you?" said he, at last. "You don't tell me it was Jopplyn?"

"The fellow called himself Jopplyn, but I know nothing of him beyond that."

"Why, he's mad jealous about that wife of his; that little

woman with the corkscrew curls, and the scorbutic face, that came over with us. Oh! you did not see her aboard, you went below at once, I remember; but there was she, in her black ugly, and her old crape shawl — ”

“In mourning?”

“Yes. Always in mourning. She never wears anything else, though Christy goes about in colors, and not particular as to the tint, either.”

There came a cold perspiration over me as I heard these words, and perceived that my proffer of devotion had been addressed to a married woman, and the wife of the “most jealous man in Europe.”

“And who is this Jopplyn?” asked I, haughtily, and in all the proud confidence of my present security.

“He’s a railway contractor, — a shrewd sort of fellow, with plenty of money, and a good head on his shoulders; sensible on every point except his jealousy.”

“The man must be an idiot,” said I, indignantly, “to rush indiscriminately about the world with accusations of this kind. Who wants to supplant him? Who seeks to rob him of the affections of his wife?”

“That’s all very well and very specious,” said he, gravely; “but if men will deliberately set themselves down at a writing-table, hammering their brains for fine sentiments, and toiling to find grand expressions for their passion, it does not require that a husband should be as jealous as Christy Jopplyn to take it badly. I don’t think I’m a rash or a hasty man, but I know what I’d do in such a circumstance.”

“And pray, what would *you* do?” said I, half impatiently.

“I’d just say, ‘Look here, young gent, is this balderdash here your hand? Well, now, eat your words. Yes, eat them. I mean what I say. Eat up that letter, seal and all, or, by my oath, I’ll break every bone in your skin!’ ”

“It is exactly what I intend,” cried a voice, hoarse with passion; and Jopplyn himself sprang into the room, and dashed at me.

The skipper was a most powerful man, but it required all his strength, and not very gingerly exercised either, to

hold off my enraged adversary. "Will you be quiet, Christy?" cried he, holding him by the throat. "Will you just be quiet for one instant, or must I knock you down?"

"Do! do! by all means," muttered I; for I thought if he were once on the ground, I could finish him off with a large pewter measure that stood on the table.

With a rough shake the skipper had at last convinced the other that resistance was useless, and induced him to consent to a parley.

"Let him only tell *you*," said he, "what he has told *me*, Christy."

"Don't strike, but hear me," cried I; and safe in my stockade behind the skipper, I recounted my mistake.

"And *you* believe all this?" asked Jopplyn of the skipper, when I had finished.

"Believe it, — I should think I do! I have known him since he was a child that high, and I'll answer for his good conduct and behavior."

Heaven bless you for that bail bond, though endorsed in a lie, honest ship-captain! and I only hope I may live to requite you for it.

Jopplyn was appeased; but it was the suppressed wrath of a brown bear rather than the vanquished anger of a man. He had booked himself for something cruel, and he was miserable to be balked. Nor was I myself — I shame to own it — an emblem of perfect forgiveness. I know nothing harder than for a constitutionally timid man of weak proportions to forgive the bullying superiority of brute force. It is about the greatest trial human forgiveness can be subjected to; so that when Jopplyn, in a vulgar spirit of reconciliation, proposed that we should go and dine with him that day, I declined the invitation with a frigid politeness.

"I wish I could persuade you to change your plans," said he, "and let Mrs. J. and myself see you at six."

"I believe I can answer for him that it is impossible," broke in the skipper; while he added in a whisper, "They never *can* afford any delay; they have to put on the steam at high pressure from one end of Europe to t' other."

What could he possibly mean by imputing such haste to my movements, and who were "they" with whom he thus

associated me? I would have given worlds to ask, but the presence of Jopplyn prevented me, and so I could simply assent with a sort of foolish laugh, and a muttered "Very true, — quite correct."

"Indeed, how you manage to be here now, I can scarcely imagine," continued the skipper. "The last of yours that went through this took a roll of bread and a cold chicken with him into the train, rather than halt to eat his supper, — but I conclude *you* know best."

What confounded mystification was passing through his marine intellects I could not fathom. To what guild or brotherhood of impetuous travellers had he ascribed me? Why should I not "take mine ease in mine inn"? All this was very tantalizing and irritating, and pleading a pressing engagement, I took leave of them both, and returned to the hotel.

I was in need of rest and a little composure. The incident of the morning had jarred my nerves and disconcerted me much. But a few hours ago, and life had seemed to me like a flowery meadow, through which, without path or track, one might ramble at will; now it rather presented the aspect of a vulgar kitchen-garden, fenced in, and divided, and partitioned off, with only a few very stony alleys to walk in. "This boasted civilization of ours," exclaimed I, "what is it but snobbery? Our class distinctions, our artificial intercourses, our hypocritical professions, our deference for externals, — are they not the flimsiest pretences that ever were fashioned? Why has no man the courage to make short work of these, and see the world as it really is? Why has not some one gone forth, the apostle of frankness and plain speaking, the same to prince as to peasant? What I would like would be a ramble through the less visited parts of Europe, — countries in which civilization slants in just as the rays of a setting sun steal into a forest at evening. I would buy me a horse. Oh, Blondel," thought I, suddenly, "am I not in search of you? Is it not in the hope to recover you that I am here; and, with you for my companion, am I not content to roam the world, taking each incident of the way with the calm of one who asks little of his fellow-man save a kind word as he passes, and

a God-speed as he goes?" I knew perfectly that, with any other beast for my "mount," I could not view the scene of life with the same bland composure. A horse that started, that tripped, that shied, reared, kicked, cromed his neck, or even shook himself, as certain of these beasts do, would have kept me in a paroxysm of anxiety and uneasiness, the least adapted of all modes for thoughtfulness and reflection. Like an ill-assorted union, it would have given no time save for squabble and recrimination. But Blondel almost seemed to understand my mission, and lent himself to its accomplishment. There was none of the obtrusive selfishness of an ordinary horse in his ways. He neither asked you to remark the glossiness of his skin, nor the graceful curve of his neck; he did not passage nor curvet. Superior to the petty arts by which vulgar natures present themselves to notice, he felt that destiny had given him a duty, and he did it.

Thus thinking, I returned once more to the spirit which had first sent me forth to ramble, to wander through the world, spectator, not actor; to be with my fellow-men in sympathy, but not in action; to sorrow and rejoice as they did, but, if possible, to understand life as a drama, in which, so long as I was the mere audience, I could never be painfully afflicted or seriously injured by the catastrophe: a wonderful philosophy, but of which, up to the present, I could not boast any pre-eminent success.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DUCHY OF HESSE-KALBBRATONSTADT.

I GREW impatient to leave Ostend; every association connected with the place was unpleasant. I hope I am not unjust in my estimate of it. I sincerely desire to be neither unjust to men nor cities, but I thought it vulgar and commonplace. I know it is hard for a watering-place to be otherwise; there is something essentially low in the green-baize and bathing-house existence, — in that semi-nude sociality, begun on the sands and carried out into deep water, which I cannot abide. I abhor, besides, a lounging population in fancy toilets, a procession of donkeys in scarlet trappings, elderly gentlemen with pocket-telescopes, and fierce old ladies with camp-stools. The worn-out debauchees come to recruit for another season of turtle and whitebait; the half-faded victims of twenty polkas per night, the tiresome politician, pale from a long session, all fiercely bent on fresh diet and sea-breezes, are perfect antipathies to me, and I would rather seek companionship in a Tyrol village than amidst these wounded and missing of a London season.

With all this I wanted to get away from the vicinity of the Jopplyns, — they were positively odious to me. Is not the man who holds in his keeping one scrap of your handwriting which displays you in a light of absurdity, far more your enemy than the holder of your protested bill? I own I think so. Debt is a very human weakness; like disease, it attacks the best and the noblest amongst us. You may pity the fellow that cannot meet that acceptance, you may be sorry for the anxiety it occasions him, the fruitless running here and there, the protestations, promises, and even lies he goes through, but no sense of ludicrous scorn mingles with your compassion, none of that contemptuous laughter with which you read a copy of absurd verses or a maudlin love-letter.

Imagine the difference of tone in him who says: "That's an old bill of poor Potts's; he'll never pay it now, and I'm sure I'll never ask him." Or, "Just read those lines; would you believe that any creature out of Hanwell could descend to such miserable drivel as that? It was one Potts who wrote it."

I wonder, could I obtain my manuscript from Jopplyn before I started. What pretext could I adduce for the request? While I thus pondered, I packed up my few wearables in my knapsack and prepared for the road. They were, indeed, a very scanty supply, and painfully suggested to my mind the estimate that waiters and hotel-porters must form of their owner. "Cruel world," muttered I, "whose maxim is, 'By their outsides shall ye judge them.' Had I arrived here with a travelling-carriage and a 'fourgon,' what respect and deference had awaited me,—how courteous the landlord, how obliging the head-waiter! Twenty attentions which could not be charged for in the bill had been shown me; and even had I, in superb dignity, declined to descend from my carriage while the post-horses were being harnessed, a levee of respectful flunkys would have awaited my orders. I have no doubt but there must be something very intoxicating in all this homage. The smoke of the hecatombs must have affected Jove as a sort of chloroform, or else he would never have sat there sniffing them for centuries. Are you ever destined to experience these sensations, Potts? Is there a time coming when anxious ears will strain to catch your words, and eyes watch eagerly for your slightest gestures? If such an era should ever come, it will be a great one for the masses of mankind, and an evil one for snobbery. Such a lesson as I will read the world on humility in high places, such an example will I give of one elevated, but uncorrupted by fortune."

"Let the carriage come to the door," said I, closing my eyes, as I sunk into my chair in revery. "Tell my people to prepare the entire of the 'Hôtel de Belle Vue' for my arrival, and my own cook to preside in the kitchen."

"Is this to go by the omnibus?" said the waiter, suddenly, on entering my room in haste. He pointed to my humble knapsack.

"Yes," said I, in deep confusion, — "yes, that's my lug-

gage, — at least, all that I have here at this moment. Where is the bill? Very moderate, indeed," muttered I, in a tone of approval. "I will take care to recommend your house; attendance prompt, and the wines excellent."

"Monsieur is complimentary," said the fellow, with a grin; "he only experimented upon a 'small Beaune' at one-twenty the bottle."

I scowled at him, and he shrank again.

"And this *objet* is also monsieur's," said he, taking up a small white canvas bag which was enclosed in my railroad wrapper.

"What is it?" cried I, taking it up. I almost fell back as I saw that it was one of the despatch-bags of the Foreign Office, which in my hasty departure from the Dover train I had accidentally carried off with me. There it was, addressed to "Sir Shalley Doubleton, H.M.'s Envoy and Minister at Hesse-Kalbratonsstadt, by the Hon. Grey Buller, Attaché," &c.

Here was not alone what might be construed into a theft, but what it was well possible might comprise one of the gravest offences against the law: it might be high treason itself! Who would ever credit my story, coupled as it was with the fact of my secret escape from the carriage; my precipitate entrance into the first place I could find, not to speak of the privacy I observed by not mixing with the passengers in the mail packet, by keeping myself estranged from all observation in the captain's cabin? Here, too, was the secret of the skipper's politeness to me: he saw the bag, and believed me to be a Foreign Office messenger, and this was his meaning, as he said, "I can answer for him, he can't delay much here." Yes; this was the entire mystification by which I obtained his favor, his politeness, and his protection. What was to be done in this exigency? Had the waiter not seen the bag, and with the instincts of his craft calmly perused the address on it, I believe — nay, I am quite convinced — I should have burned it and its contents on the spot. The thought of his evidence against me in the event of a discovery, however, entirely routed this notion, and, after a brief consideration I resolved to convey the bag to its destination, and trump up the most plausible

explanation I could of the way it came into my possession. His Excellency, I reasoned, will doubtless be too delighted to receive his despatches to inquire very minutely as to the means by which they were recovered, nor is it quite impossible that he may feel bound to mark my zeal for the public service by some token of recognition. This was a pleasant turn to give to my thoughts, and I took it with all the avidity of my peculiar temperament. "Yes," thought I, "it is just out of trivial incidents like this a man's fortune is made in life. For one man who mounts to greatness by the great entrance and the state staircase, ten thousand slip in by *la petite Porte*. It is, in fact, only by these chances that obscure genius obtains acknowledgment. How, for example, should this great diplomatist know Potts if some accident should not throw them together? Raleigh flung his laced jacket in a puddle, and for his reward he got a proud Queen's favor. A village apothecary had the good fortune to be visiting the state apartments at the Pavilion when George the Fourth was seized with a fit; he bled him, brought him back to consciousness, and made him laugh by his genial and quaint humor. The king took a fancy to him, named him his physician, and made his fortune. I have often heard it remarked by men who have seen much of life, that nobody, not one, goes through the world without two or three such opportunities presenting themselves. The careless, the indolent, the unobservant, and the idle, either fail to remark, or are too slow to profit by them. The sharp-fellows, on the contrary, see in such incidents all that they need to lead them to success. Into which of these categories you are to enter, Potts, let this incident decide."

Having by a reference to my John Murray ascertained the whereabouts of the capital of Hesse-Kalbbatronstadt, I took my place at once on the rail for Cologne, reading myself up on its beauty and its belongings as I went. There is, however, such a dreary sameness in these small Ducal states, that I am ashamed to say how little I gleaned of anything distinctive in the case before me. The reigning sovereign was, of course, married to a Grand Duchess of Russia, and he lived at a country-seat called Ludwig's Lust, or Carl's Lust, as it might be, "took little interest in politics,"

—how should he?—and “passed much of his time in mechanical pursuits, in which he had attained considerable proficiency;” in other words, he was a middle-aged gentleman, fond of his pipe, and with a taste for carpentry. Some sort of connection with our own royal family had been the pretext for having a resident minister at his court, though what he was to do when he was there seemed not so easy to say. Even John, glorious John, was puzzled how to make a respectable half-page out of his capital, though there was a dome in the Byzantine style, with an altarpiece by Peter von Grys, the angels in the corner being added afterwards by Hans Lüders; and there was a Hof Theatre, and an excellent inn, the “Schwein,” by Kramm, where the sausages of home manufacture were highly recommendable, no less than a table wine of the host’s vineyard, called “Magenschmerzer,” and which, Murray adds, would doubtless, if known, find many admirers in England; and lastly, but far from leastly, there was a Music Garten, where popular pieces were performed very finely by an excellent German band, and to which promenade all the fashion of the capital nightly resorted.

I give you all these details, respected reader, just as I got them in my “Northern Germany,” and not intending to obtrude any further description of my own upon you; for who, I would ask, could amplify upon his Handbook? What remains to be noted after John has taken the inventory? Has he forgotten a nail or a saint’s shin-bone? With him for a guide, a man may feel that he has done his Europe conscientiously; and though it be hard to treasure up all the hard names of poets, painters, priests, and warriors, it is not worse than botany, and about as profitable.

For the same reason that I have given above, I spare my reader all the circumstances of my journey, my difficulties about carriage, my embarrassments about steamboats and cab fares, which were all of the order that Brown and Jones have experienced, are experiencing, and will continue to experience, till the arrival of that millenary period when we shall all converse in any tongue we please.

It was at nightfall that I drove into Kalbbratonstadt, my postilion announcing my advent at the gates, and all the

way to the Platz where the inn stood, by a volley of whip-crackings which might have announced a Grand-Duke or a prima donna. Some casements were hastily opened, as we rumbled along, and the guests of a *café* issued hurriedly into the street to watch us; but these demonstrations over, I gained the "Schwein" without further notice, and descended.

Herr Kramm looked suspiciously at the small amount of luggage of the traveller who arrived by "extra post," but, like an honest German, he was not one to form rash judgments, and so he showed me to a comfortable apartment, and took my orders for supper in all respectfulness. He waited upon me also at my meal, and gave me opportunity for conversation. While I ate my Carbonade mit Kartoffel-Salad, therefore, I learned that, being already nine o'clock, it was far too late an hour to present myself at the English Embassy, — for so he designated our minister's residence; that, at this advanced period of the night there were but few citizens out of their beds: the Ducal candle was always extinguished at half-past eight, and only roisterers and revellers kept it up much later. My first surprise over, I owned I liked all this. It smacked of that simple patriarchal existence I had so long yearned after. Let the learned explain it, but there is, I assert, something in the early hours of a people that guarantee habits of simplicity, thrift, and order. It is all very well to say that people can be as wicked at eight in the evening as at two or three in the morning; that crime cares little for the clock, nor does vice respect the chronometer; but does experience confirm this, and are not the small hours notorious for the smallest moralities? The Grand-Duke, who is fast asleep at nine, is scarcely disturbed by dreams of cruelties to his people. The police minister, who takes his bedroom candle at the same hour, is seldom harassed by devising new schemes of torture for his victims. I suffered my host to talk largely of his town and its people; and probably such a listener rarely presented himself, for he certainly improved the occasion. He assured me, with a gravity that vouched for the conviction, that the capital, though by no means so dear as London or Paris, contained much, if not all, these more pretentious cities could boast. There was a court, a theatre, a

promenade, a public fountain, and a new jail, one of the largest in all Germany. Jenny Lind had once sung at the opera on her way to Vienna; and to prove how they sympathized in every respect with greater centres of population, when the cholera raged at Berlin, they, too, lost about four hundred of their townfolk. Lastly, he mentioned, and this boastfully, that though neither wanting organs of public opinion, nor men of adequate ability to guide them, the Kalbbratoners had never mixed themselves up in politics, but proudly maintained that calm and dignified attitude which Europe would one day appreciate; that is, if she ever arrived at the crowning knowledge of the benefit of letting her differences be decided by some impartial umpire.

More than once, as I heard him, I muttered to myself, "Potts, this is the very spot you have sought for; here is all the tranquil simplicity of the village, with the elevated culture of a great city. Here are sages and philosophers clad in homespun, Beauty herself in linsey-woolsey. Here there are no vulgar rivalries of riches, no contests in fine clothes, no opposing armies of yellow plush. Men are great by their faculties, not in their flunkys. How elevated must be the tone of their thoughts, the style of their conversation! and what a lucky accident it was that led you to that goal to which all your wishes and hopes have been converging! — For how much can a man live — a single gentleman like myself — here in your city?" asked I of my host.

He sat down at this, and, filling himself a large goblet of my wine, — the last in the bottle, — he prepared for a lengthy *séance*.

"First of all," said he, "how would he wish to live? Would he desire to mingle in our best circles, equal to any in Europe, to know Herr von Krugwitz, and the Gnädige Frau von Steinhaltz?"

"Well," thought I, "these be fair ambitions." And I said, "Yes, both of them."

"And to be on the list of the court dinners? There are two yearly, one at Easter, the other on his Highness's birthday, whom may Providence long protect!"

To this also might he aspire.

"And to have a stall at the Grand Opera, and a carriage

to return visits — twice in carnival time — and to live in a handsome quarter, and dine every day at our *table d'hôte* here with General von Beulwitz and the Hofrath von Schlaff-richter? A life like this is costly, and would scarcely be comprised under two thousand florins a year."

How my heart bounded at the notion of refinement, culture, elevated minds, and polished habits; "science," indeed, and the "musical glasses," all for one hundred and sixty pounds per annum.

"It is not improbable that you will see me your guest for many a day to come," said I, as I ordered another bottle, and of a more generous vintage, to honor the occasion.

My host offered no opposition to my convivial projects; nay, he aided them by saying, —

"If you have really an appreciation for something super-excellent in wine, and wish to taste what Freiligrath calls 'der Deutschen Nectar,' I'll go and fetch you a bottle."

"Bring it by all means," said I. And away he went on his mission.

"Providence blessed me with two hands," said he, as he re-entered the room, "and I have brought two flasks of Lieb Herzenthaler."

There is something very artistic in the way your picture-dealer, having brushed away the dust from a Mieris or a Gerard Dow, places the work in a favorite light before you, and then stands to watch the effect on your countenance. So, too, will your man of rare manuscripts and illuminated missals offer to your notice some illegible treasure of the fourth century; but these are nothing to the mysterious solemnity of him who, uncorking a bottle of rare wine, waits to note the varying sensations of your first enjoyment down to your perfect ecstasy.

I tried to perform my part of the piece with credit: I looked long at the amber-colored liquor in the glass; I sniffed it and smiled approvingly; the host smiled too, and said, "Ja!" Not another syllable did he utter, but how expressive was that "Ja!" "Ja!" meant, "You are right, Potts, it is the veritable wine of 1764, bottled for the Herzog Ludwig's marriage; every drop of it is priceless. Mark the odor, how it perfumes the air around

us; regard the color — the golden hair of Venus can alone rival it; see how the oily globules cling to the glass!" "Ja!" meant all this, and more.

As I drank off my glass, I was sorely puzzled by the precise expression in which to couch my approval; but he supplied it and said, "Is it not Göttlich?" and I said it *was* Göttlich; and while we finished the two bottles, this solitary phrase sufficed for converse between us, "Göttlich!" being uttered by each as he drained his glass, and "Göttlich!" being re-echoed by his companion.

There is great wisdom in reducing our admiration to a word; giving, as it were, a cognate number to our estimate of anything. Wherever we amplify, we usually blunder: we employ epithets that disagree, or, in even less questionable taste, soar into extravagances that are absurd. Besides, our moods of highest enjoyment are not such as dispose to talkativeness; the ecstasy that is most enthralling is self-contained. Who, on looking at a glorious landscape, does not feel the insufferable bathos of the descriptive enthusiast beside him? How grateful would he own himself if he would be satisfied with one word for his admiration! And if one needs this calm repose, this unbroken peace, for the enjoyment of scenery, equally is it applicable to our appreciation of a curious wine. I have no recollection that any further conversation passed between us, but I have never ceased, and most probably never shall cease, to have a perfect memory of the pleasant ramble of my thoughts as I sat there sipping, sipping. I pondered long over a plan of settling down in this place for life, by what means I could realize sufficient to live in that elevated sphere the host spoke of. If Potts *père* — I mean my father — were to learn that I were received in the highest circles, admitted to all that was most socially exclusive, would he be induced to make an adequate provision for me? He was an ambitious and a worldly man; would he see in these beginnings of mine the seeds of future greatness? Fathers, I well knew, are splendidly generous to their successful children, and "the poor they send empty away." It is so pleasant to aid him who does not need assistance, and such a hopeless task to be always saving him who *will* be drowned.

My first care, therefore, should be to impress upon my parent the appropriateness of his contributing his share to what already was an accomplished success. "Wishing, as the French say, to make you a part in my triumph, dear father, I write these lines." How I picture him to my mind's eye as he reads this, running frantically about to his neighbors, and saying, "I have got a letter from Algy, — strange boy, — but as I always foresaw, with great stuff in him, very remarkable abilities. See what he has done, — struck out a perfect line of his own in life; just the sort of thing genius alone can do. He went off from this one morning by way of a day's excursion, never returned, — never wrote. All my efforts to trace him were in vain. I advertised, and offered rewards, did everything, without success; and now, after all this long interval, comes a letter by this morning's post to tell me that he is well, happy, and prosperous. He is settled, it appears, in a German capital with a hard name, a charming spot, with every accessory of enjoyment in it: men of the highest culture, and women of most graceful and attractive manner; as he himself writes, 'the elegance of a Parisian *salon* added to the wisdom of the professor's cabinet.' Here is Algy living with all that is highest in rank and most distinguished in station; the favored guest of the Prince, the bosom friend of the English minister; his advice sought for, his counsel asked in every difficulty; trusted in the most important state offices, and taken into the most secret counsels of the duchy. Though the requirements of his station make heavy demands upon his means, very little help from me will enable him to maintain a position which a few years more will have consolidated into a rank recognized throughout Europe." Would the flintiest of fathers, would the most primitive rock-hearted of parents, resist an appeal like this? It is no hand to rescue from the waves is sought, but a little finger to help to affluence. "Of course you'll do it, Potts, and do it liberally; the boy is a credit to you. He will place your name where you never dreamed to see it. What do you mean to settle on him? Above all things, no stinginess; don't disgust him."

I hear these and such-like on every hand; even the most

close-fisted and miserly of our acquaintances will be generous of their friend's money; and I think I hear the sage remarks with which they season advice with touching allusions to that well-known ship that was lost for want of a small outlay in tar. "Come down handsomely, Potts," says a resolute man, who has sworn never to pay a sixpence of his son's debts. "What better use can we make of our hoardings than to render our young people happy?" I don't like the man who says this, but I like his sentiments; and I am much pleased when he goes on to remark that "there is no such good investment as what establishes a successful son. Be proud of the boy, Potts, and thank your stars that he had a soul above senna, and a spirit above sal volatile!"

As I invent all this play of dialogue for myself, and picture the speakers before me, I come at last to a small peevish little fellow named Lynch, a merchant tailor, who lived next door to us, and enjoyed much of my father's confidence. "So they tell me you have heard from that runaway of yours, Potts. Is it true? What face does he put upon his disgraceful conduct? What became of the livery-stable-keeper's horse? Did he sell him, or ride him to death? A bad business if he should ever come back again, which, of course, he's too wise for. And where is he now, and what is he at?"

"You may read this letter, Mr. Lynch," replies my father; "he is one who can speak for himself." And Lynch reads and sniggers, and reads again. I see him as plainly as if he were but a yard from me. "I never heard of this ducal capital before," he begins, "but I suppose it's like the rest of them, — little obscure dens of pretentious poverty, plenty of ceremony, and very little to eat. How did he find it out? What brought him there?"

"You have this letter before you, sir," says my parent, proudly. "Algernon Sydney is, I imagine, quite competent to explain what relates to his own affairs."

"Oh, perfectly, perfectly; only that I can't really make out how he first came to this place, nor what it is that he does there now that he's in it."

My father hastily snatches the letter from his hands, and runs his eye rapidly along to catch the passage which shall confute the objector and cover him with shame and con-

fusion. He cannot find it at once. "It is this. No, it is on this side. Very strange, very singular indeed; but as Algernon must have told me—" Alas! no, father, he has not told you, and for the simple reason that he does not know it himself. For though I mentioned with becoming pride the prominent stations Irishmen now hold in most of the great states of Europe, and pointed to O'Donnel in Spain, MacMahon in France, and the Field-Marshal Nugent in Austria, I utterly forgot to designate the high post occupied by Potts in the Duchy of Hesse-Kalbbatronstadt. To determine what this should be was now of imminent importance, and I gave myself up to the solution with a degree of intentness and an amount of concentration that set me off sound asleep.

Yes, benevolent reader, I will confess it, questions of a complicated character have always affected me, as the inside of a letter seems to have struck Tony Lumkin, — "all buzz." I start with the most loyal desire to be acute and penetrating; I set myself to my task with as honest a disposition to do my best as ever man did; I say, "Now, Potts, no self-indulgence, no skulking; here is a knotty problem, here is a case for your best faculties in their sharpest exercise;" and if any one come in upon me about ten minutes after this resolve, he will see a man who could beat Sancho Panza in sleeping!

Of course this tendency has often cost me dearly; I have missed appointments, forgotten assignations, lost friends through it. My character, too, has suffered, many deeming me insupportably indolent, a sluggard quite unfit for any active employment. Others, more mercifully hinting at some "cerebral cause," have done me equal damage; but there happily is an obverse on the medal, and to this somnolency do I ascribe much of the gentleness and all the romance of my nature. It is your sleepy man is ever benevolent, he loves ease and quiet for others as for himself. What he cultivates is the tranquil mood that leads to slumber, and the calm that sustains it. The very operations of the mind in sleep are broken, incoherent, undelineated, — just like the waking occupations of an idle man; they are thoughts that cost so little to manufacture, that he can afford to be lavish of them. And now — Good-night!

CHAPTER XIII.

I CALL AT THE BRITISH LEGATION.

BREAKFAST over, I took a walk through the town. Though in a measure prepared for a scene of unbustling quietude and tranquillity, I must own that the air of repose around, far surpassed all I had imagined. The streets through which I sauntered were grass-grown and untrodden; the shops were but half open; not an equipage, nor even a horseman was to be seen. In the Platz, where a sort of fruit-market was held, a few vendors of grapes, peaches, and melons sat under large crimson umbrellas, but there seemed few purchasers, except a passing schoolboy, carefully scanning the temptations in which he was about to invest his kreutzer.

The most remarkable feature of the place, however, and it is one which, through a certain significance, has always held its place in my memory, was that, go where one would, the palace of the Grand-Duke was sure to finish the view at one extremity of the street. In fact, every alley converged to this one centre, and the royal residence stood like the governor's chamber in a panopticon jail. There did my mind for many a day picture him sitting like a huge spider watching the incautious insects that permeated his web. I imagined him fat, indolent, and apathetic, but yet, with a jailer's instincts, ever mindful of every stir and movement of the prisoners below. With a very ordinary telescope he must be master of everything that went on, and the humblest incident could not escape his notice. Was it the consciousness of this surveillance that made every one keep the house? Was it the feeling that the "Gross Herzogliche" eye never left them, that prevented men being abroad in the streets and about their affairs as in other places? I half suspected

this, and set to work imagining a state of society thus scanned and scrutinized. But that the general aspect of the town so palpably proclaimed the absence of all trade and industry, I might have compared the whole to a glass hive; but they were all drones that dwelt there, there was not one "busy bee" in the whole of them.

When I rambled thus carelessly along, I came in front of a sort of garden fenced from the street by an iron railing. The laurel and arbutus, and even the oleander, were there, gracefully blending a varied foliage, and contrasting in their luxuriant liberty so pleasantly with the dull uniformity outside. Finding a gate wide open, I strolled in, and gave myself up to the delicious enjoyment of the spot. As I was deliberating whether this was a public garden or not, I found myself before a long, low, villa-like building, with a colonnade in front. Over the entrance was a large shield, which on nearer approach I recognized to contain the arms of England. This, therefore, was the legation, the residence of our minister, Sir Shalley Doubleton. I felt a very British pride and satisfaction to see our representative lodged so splendidly. With all the taxpayer's sentiment in my heart, I rejoiced to think that he who personated the nation should, in all his belongings, typify the wealth, the style, and the grandeur of England, and in the ardor of this enthusiasm, I hastened back to the inn for the despatch-bag.

Armed with this, and a card, I soon presented myself at the door. On the card I had written, "Mr. Pottinger presents his respectful compliments, and requests his Excellency will favor him with an audience of a few minutes for an explanation."

I had made up my mind to state that my servant, in removing my smaller luggage from the train, had accidentally carried off this Foreign Office bag, which, though at considerable inconvenience, I had travelled much out of my way to restore in person. I had practised this explanation as I dressed in the morning, I had twice rehearsed it to an orange-tree in the garden, before which I had bowed till my back ached, and I fancied myself perfect in my part. It would, I confess, have been a great relief to me to have had only the slightest knowledge of the great

personage before whom I was about to present myself, to have known was he short or tall, young or old, solemn or easy-mannered, had he a loud voice and an imperious tone, or was he of the soft and silky order of his craft. I'd have willingly entertained his "gentleman" at a moderate repast for some information on these points, but there was no time for the inquiry, and so I rang boldly at the bell. The door opened of itself at the summons, and I found myself in a large hall with a plaster cast of the Laocoon, and nothing else. I tried several of the doors on either side, but they were all locked. A very handsome and spacious stair of white marble led up from the middle of the hall; but I hesitated about venturing to ascend this, and once more repaired to the bell outside, and repeated my summons. The loud clang re-echoed through the arched hall, the open door gave a responsive shake, and that was all. No one came; everything was still as before. I was rather chagrined at this. The personal inconvenience was less offensive than the feeling how foreigners would comment on such want of propriety, what censures they would pass on such an ill-arranged household. I rang again, this time with an energy that made the door strike some of the plaster from the wall, and, with a noise like cannon, "What the hang-man" — I am translating — "is all this?" cried a voice thick with passion; and, on looking up, I saw a rather elderly man, with a quantity of curly yellow hair, frowning savagely on me from the balcony over the stair. He made no sign of coming down, but gazed sternly at me from his eminence.

"Can I see his Excellency, the Minister?" said I, with dignity.

"Not if you stop down there, not if you continue to ring the bell like an alarm for fire, not if you won't take the trouble to come upstairs."

I slowly began the ascent at these words, pondering what sort of a master such a man must needs have. As I gained the top, I found myself in front of a very short, very fat man, dressed in a suit of striped gingham, like an over-plethoric zebra, and wheezing painfully, in part from asthma, in part from agitation. He began again, —

“What the hangman do you mean by such a row? Have you no manners, no education? Where were you brought up that you enter a dwelling-house like a city in storm?”

“Who is this insolent creature that dares to address me in this wise? What ignorant menial can have so far forgotten my rank and his insignificance?”

“I’ll tell you all that presently,” said he; “there’s his Excellency’s bell.” And he bustled away, as fast as his unwieldy size would permit, to his master’s room.

I was outraged and indignant. There was I, Potts, — no, Pottinger, — Algernon Sydney Pottinger, — on my way to Italy and Greece, turning from my direct road to consign with safety a despatch-bag which many a less conscientious man would have chucked out of his carriage window and forgotten; there I stood to be insulted by a miserable stone-polishing, floor-scrubbing, carpet-twigging Hausknecht? Was this to be borne? Was it to be endured? Was a man of station, family, and attainments to be the object of such indignity?

Just as I had uttered this speech aloud, a very gentle voice addressed me, saying, —

“Perhaps I can assist you? Will you be good enough to say what you want?”

I started suddenly, looked up, and whom should I see before me but that Miss Herbert, the beautiful girl in deep mourning that I had met at Milford, and who now, in the same pale loveliness, turned on me a look of kind and gentle meaning.

“Do you remember me?” said I, eagerly. “Do you remember the traveller — a pale young man, with a Glengarry cap and a plaid overcoat — who met you at Milford?”

“Perfectly,” said she, with a slight twitch about the mouth like a struggle against a smile. “Will you allow me to repay you now for your politeness then? Do you wish to see his Excellency?”

I’m not very sure what it was I replied, but I know well what was passing through my head. If my thoughts could have spoken, it would have been in this wise, —

“Angel of loveliness, I don’t care a brass farthing for his Excellency. It is not a matter of the slightest moment

to me if I never set eyes on him. Let me but speak to you, tell you the deep impression you have made upon my heart; how, in my ardor to serve you, I have already been involved in an altercation that might have cost me my life; how I still treasure up the few minutes I passed beside you as the Elysian dream of all my life — ”

“I am certain, sir,” broke she in while I spoke, I repeat, I know not what, — “I am certain, sir, that you never came here to mention all this to his Excellency.”

There was a severe gravity in the way that she said these words that recalled me to myself, but not to any consciousness of what I had been saying; and so, in my utter discomfiture, I blundered out something about the lost despatches and the cause of my coming.

“If you ’ll wait a moment here,” said she, opening a door into a neatly furnished room, “his Excellency shall hear of your wish to see him.” And before I could answer, she was gone.

I was now alone, but in what wild perplexity and anxiety! How came she here? What could be the meaning of her presence in this place? The Minister was an unmarried man, so much my host had told me. How then reconcile this fact with the presence of one who had left England but a few days ago, as some said, to be a governess or a companion? Oh, the agony of my doubts, the terrible agony of my dire misgivings! What a world of iniquity do we live in, what vice and corruption are ever around us! It was but a year or two ago, I remember, that the “Times ” newspaper had exposed the nefarious schemes of a wretch who had deliberately invented a plan to entrap those most unprotected of all females. The adventures of this villain had become part of the police literature of Europe. Young and attractive creatures, induced to come abroad by promises of the most seductive kind, had been robbed by this man of all they possessed, and deserted here and there throughout the Continent. I was so horror-stricken by the terrors my mind had so suddenly conjured up, that I could not acquire the calm and coolness requisite for a process of reasoning. My over-active imagination, as usual, went off with me, clearing obstacles with a sweeping stride, and

steep-lechasing through fact as though it were only a gallop over grass land.

"Poor girl, Well might you look confused and overwhelmed at meeting me! Well might the flush of shame have spread over your neck and shoulders, and well might you have hurried away from the presence of one who had known you in the days of your happy innocence!" I am not sure that I did n't imagine I had been her playfellow in childhood, and that we had been brought up from infancy together. My mind then addressed itself to the practical question, What was to be done? Was I to turn my head away while this iniquity was being enacted? was I to go on my way, forgetting the seeds of that misery whose terrible fruits must one day be a shame and an open ignominy? or was I to arraign this man, great and exalted as he was, and say to him, "Is it thus you represent before the eyes of the foreigner the virtues of that England we boast to be the model of all morality? Is it thus you illustrate the habits of your order? Do you dare to profane what, by the fiction of diplomacy, is called the soil of your country, by a life that you dare not pursue at home? The Parliament shall hear of it; the 'Times' shall ring with it; that magnificent institution, the common sense of England, long sick of what is called secret diplomacy, shall learn at last to what uses are applied the wiles and snares of this deceitful craft, its extraordinary and its private missions, its hurried messengers with their bags of corruption —"

I was well "into my work," and was going along slap-pingly, when a very trim footman, in a nankeen jacket, said, —

"If you will come this way, sir, his Excellency will see you."

He led me through three or four *salons* handsomely furnished and ornamented with pictures, the most conspicuous of which, in each room, was a life-sized portrait of the same gentleman, though in a different costume, — now in the Windsor uniform, now as a Guardsman, and, lastly, in the full dress of the diplomatic order. I had but time to guess that this must be his Excellency, when the servant announced me and retired.

It is in deep shame that I own that the aspect of the princely apartments, the silence, the implied awe of the footman's subdued words as he spoke, had so routed all my intentions about calling his Excellency to account that I stood in his presence timid and abashed. It is an ignoble confession wrung out of the very heart of my snobbery, that no sooner did I find myself before that thin, pale, gray-headed man, who in a light silk dressing-gown and slippers sat writing away, than I gave up my brief, and inwardly resigned my place as a counsel for injured innocence.

He never raised his head as I entered, but continued his occupation without noticing me, muttering below his breath the words as they fell from his pen. "Take a seat," said he, curtly, at last. Perceiving now that he was fully aware of my presence, I sat down without reply. "This bag is late, Mr. Paynter," said he, blandly, as he laid down his pen and looked me in the face.

"Your Excellency will permit me, *in limine*, to observe that my name is not Paynter."

"Possibly, sir," said he, haughtily; "but you are evidently before me for the first time, or you would know that, like my great colleague and friend, Prince Metternich, I have made it a rule through life never to burden my memory with whatever can be spared it, and of these are the patronymics of all subordinate people; for this reason, sir, and to this end, every cook in my establishment answers to the name of Honoré, my valet is always Pierre, my coachman Jacob, my groom is Charles, and all foreign messengers I call Paynter. The original of that appellation is, I fancy, superannuated or dead, but he lives in some twenty successors who carry canvas reticules as well as he."

"The method may be convenient, sir, but it is scarcely complimentary," said I, stiffly.

"Very convenient," said he, complacently. "All consuls I address as Mr. Sloper. You can't fail to perceive how it saves time, and I rather think that in the end they like it themselves. When did you leave town?"

"I left on Saturday last. I arrived at Dover by the express train, and it was there that the incident befell me

by which I have now the honor to stand before your Excellency."

Instead of bestowing the slightest attention on this exordium of mine, he had resumed his pen and was writing away glibly as before. "Nothing new stirring, when you left?" said he, carelessly.

"Nothing, sir. But to resume my narrative of explanation—"

"Come to dinner, Paynter; we dine at six," said he, rising hastily; and, opening a glass door into a conservatory, walked away, leaving me in a mingled state of shame, anger, humiliation, and, I will state, of ludicrous embarrassment, which I have no words to express.

"Dinner! No," exclaimed I, "if the alternative were a hard crust and a glass of spring water! not if I were to fast till this time to-morrow! Dine with a man who will not condescend to acknowledge even my identity, who will not deign to call me by my name, but only consents to regard me as a pebble on the seashore, a blade of grass in a wide meadow! Dine with him, to be addressed as Mr. Paynter, and to see Pierre, and Jacob, and the rest of them looking on me as one of themselves! By what prescriptive right does this man dare to insult those who, for aught he can tell, are more than his equals in ability? Does the accident—and what other can it be than accident?—of his station confer this privilege? How would he look if one were to retort with his own impertinence? What, for instance, if I were to say, 'I always call small diplomatists Bluebottles! You'll not be offended if, just for memory's sake, I address you as Bluebottle, — Mr. Bluebottle, of course?'"

I was in ecstasies at this thought. It seemed to vindicate all my insulted personality, all my outraged and injured identity. "Yes," said I, "I will dine with him; six o'clock shall see me punctual to the minute, and determined to avenge the whole insulted family of the Paynters. I defy him to assert that the provocation came not from *his* side. I dare him to show cause why I should be the butt of *his* humor, any more than he of *mine*. I will be prepared to make use of his own exact words in repelling my impertinence, and say, 'Sir, you have exactly embodied *my* mean-

ing; you have to the letter expressed what this morning I felt on being called Mr. Paynter; you have, besides this, had the opportunity of experiencing the sort of pain such an impertinence inflicts, and you are now in a position to guide you as to how far you will persist in it for the future.' ”

I actually revelled in the thought of this reprisal, and longed for the moment to come in which, indolently thrown back in my chair, I should say, “Bluebottle, pass the Madeira,” with some comment on the advantage all the Bluebottles have in getting their wine duty free. Then, with what sarcastic irony I should condole with him over his wearisome, dull career, eternally writing home platitudes for blue-books, making Grotius into bad grammar, and vamping up old Puffendorf for popular reading. “Ain't you sick of it all, B.-B.?” I should say, familiarly; “is not the unreality of the whole thing offensive? Don't you feel that a despatch is a sort of formula in which Madrid might be inserted for Moscow, and what was said of Naples might be predicated for Norway?” I disputed a long time with myself at what precise period of the entertainment I should unmask my battery and open fire. Should it be in the drawing-room, before dinner? Should it be immediately after the soup, with the first glass of sherry? Ought I to wait till the dessert, and that time when a sort of easy intimacy had been established which might be supposed to prompt candor and frankness? Would it not be in better taste to defer it till the servants had left the room? To expose him to his household seemed scarcely fair.

These were all knotty points, and I revolved them long and carefully, as I came back to my hotel, through the same silent street.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHAMEFUL NEGLECT OF A PUBLIC SERVANT.

"Don't keep a place for me at the *table d'hôte* to-day, Kramm," said I, in an easy carelessness; "I dine with his Excellency. I could n't well get off the first day, but to-morrow I promise you to pronounce upon your good cheer."

I suppose I am not the first man who has derived consequence from the invitation it had cost him misery to accept. How many in this world of snobbery have felt that the one sole recompense for long nights of *ennui* was the fact that their names figured amongst the distinguished guests in the next day's "Post"?

"It is not a grand dinner to-day, is it?" asked Kramm.

"No, no, merely a family party; we are very old chums, and have much to talk over."

"You will then go in plain black, and with nothing but your 'decorations.'"

"I will wear none," said I, "none; not even a ribbon." And I turned away to hide the shame and mortification his suggestion had provoked.

Punctually at six o'clock I arrived at the legation; four powdered footmen were in the hall, and a decent-looking personage in black preceded me up the stairs, and opened the double doors into the drawing-room, without, however, announcing me, or paying the slightest attention to my mention of "Mr. Pottinger."

Laying down his newspaper as I entered, his Excellency came forward with his hand out, and though it was the least imaginable touch, and his bow was grandly ceremonious, his smile was courteous and his manner bland.

"Charmed to find you know the merit of punctuality," said he. "To the untravelled English, six means seven, or

even later. You may serve dinner, Robins. Strange weather we are having," continued he, turning to me; "cold, raw, and uncongenial."

We talked "barometer" till, the door opening, the *maître d'hôtel* announced, "His Excellency is served;" a rather unpolite mode, I thought, of ignoring his company, and which was even more strongly impressed by the fact that he walked in first, leaving me to follow.

At the table a third "cover" was just being speedily removed as we entered, a fact that smote at my heart like a blow. The dinner began, and went on with little said; a faint question from the Minister as to what the dish contained and a whispered reply constituted most of the talk, and an occasional cold recommendation to me to try this or that *entrée*. It was admirable in all its details, the cookery exquisite, the wines delicious, but there was an oppression in the solemnity of it all that made me sigh repeatedly. Had the butler been serving a high mass, his motions at the sideboard could scarcely have been more reverential.

"If you don't object to the open air, we'll take our coffee on the terrace," said his Excellency; and we soon found ourselves on a most charming elevation, surrounded on three sides with orange-trees, the fourth opening a magnificent view over a fine landscape with the Taunus mountains in the distance.

"I can offer you, at least, a good cigar," said the Minister, as he selected with great care two from a number on a silver plateau before him. "These, I think, you will find recommendable; they are grown for myself at Cuba, and prepared after a receipt only known to one family."

In all this there was a dignified civility, not at all like the impertinent freedom of his manner in the morning. He never, besides, addressed me as Mr. Paynter; in fact, he did not advert to a name at all, not giving me the slightest pretext for that reprisal I had come so charged with; and, as to opening the campaign myself, I'd as soon have commenced acquaintance with a tiger by a pull at his tail. We were now alone; the servants had retired, and there we sat, silently smoking our cigars in apparent ease, but one of us, at least, in a frame of mind the very opposite to tranquillity.

What a rush and conflict of thought was in my head! Why had not *she* dined with us? Was her position such as that the presence of a stranger became an embarrassment? Good heaven! was I to suppose this, that, and the other? What was there in this man that so imposed on me, that when I wanted to speak I only could sigh, and that I felt his presence like some overpowering spell? It was that calm, self-contained, quiet manner — cold rather than austere, courteous without cordiality — that chilled me to the very marrow of my bones. Lecture *him* on the private moralities of his life! ask *him* to render me an account of his actions! address *him* as Bluebottle! —

"With such tobacco as that, one can drink Bordeaux," said he. "Help yourself."

And I did help myself, — freely, repeatedly. I drank for courage, as a man might drink from thirst or fever, or for strength in a moment of fainting debility. The wine was exquisite, and my heart beat more forcibly, and I felt it.

I cannot follow very connectedly the course of events; I neither know how the conversation glided into politics, nor what I said on that subject. As to the steps by which I succeeded in obtaining his Excellency's confidence, I know as little as a man does of the precise moment in which he is wet through in a Scotch mist. I have a dim memory of talking in a very dictatorial voice, and continually referring to my "entrance into public life," with reference to what Peel "said," and what the Duke "told me."

"What's the use of writing home?" said his Excellency, in a desponding voice. "For the last five years I have called attention to what is going on here; nobody minds, nobody heeds it. Open any blue-book you like, and will you find one solitary despatch from Hesse-Kalbratonsstadt?"

"I cannot call one to mind."

"Of course you can't. Would you believe it, when the Zeringer party went out, and the Schlafdorfers came in, I was rebuked — actually rebuked — for sending off a special messenger with the news? And then came out a despatch in cipher, which being interpreted contained this stupid doggerel: —

“‘Strange that such difference should be
‘Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.’

“I ask, sir, is it thus the affairs of a great country can be carried on? The efforts of Russia here are incessant: a certain personage—I will mention no names—loves caviare, he likes it fresh, there is a special *estaffette* established to bring it! I learned, by the most insidious researches, his fondness for English cheese; I lost no time in putting the fact before the cabinet I represented, that while timid men looked tremblingly towards France, the thoughtful politician saw the peril of Hesse-Kalbbratonstadt. I urged them to lose no time: ‘The Grand-Duchess has immense influence; countermine her,’ said I, — ‘countermine her with a Stilton;’ and, would you believe it, sir, they have not so much as sent out a Cheddar! What will the people of England say one of these days when they learn, as learn they shall, that at this mission here I am alone; that I have neither secretary nor *attaché*, paid or unpaid; that since the Crimean War the whole weight of the legation has been thrown upon me: nor is this all; but that a systematic course of treachery—I can’t call it lies—has been adopted to entrap me, if such were possible? My despatches are unreplyed to, my questions all unanswered. I stand here with the peace of Europe in my hands, and none to counsel nor advise me. What will you say, sir, to the very last despatch I have received from Downing Street? It runs thus:—

“‘I am instructed by his Lordship to inform you, that he views with indifference your statement of the internal condition of the grand-duchy, but is much struck by your charge for sealing-wax.

“‘I have, sir, &c.’

“This is no longer to be endured. A public servant who has filled some of the most responsible of official stations, — I was eleven years at Tragotà, in the Argentine Republic; I was a *chargé* at Oohululoo for eight months, the only European who ever survived an autumn there; they then sent me special to Cabanhos to negotiate the Salt-sprat treaty; after that—”

Here my senses grew muddy; the gray dim light, the soft influences of a good dinner and a sufficiency of wine, the drowsy tenor of the Minister's voice, all conspired, and I slept as soundly as if in my bed. My next conscious moment was as his Excellency moved his chair back, and said, —

“I think a cup of tea would be pleasant; let us come into the drawing-room.”

CHAPTER XV.

I LECTURE THE AMBASSADOR'S SISTER.

ON entering the drawing-room, his Excellency presented me to an elderly lady, very thin, and very wrinkled, who received me with a cold dignity, and then went on with her crochet-work. I could not catch her name, nor, indeed, was I thinking of it; my whole mind was bent upon the question, Who could she be? For what object was she there? All my terrible doubts of the morning now rushed forcibly back to my memory, and I felt that never had I detested a human being with the hate I experienced for her. The pretentious stiffness of her manner, the haughty self-possession she wore, were positive outrages; and as I looked at her, I felt myself muttering, "Don't imagine that your heavy black moiré, or your rich falls of lace, impose upon *me*. Never fancy that this mock austerity deceives one who reads human nature as he reads large print. I know, and I abhor you, old woman! That a man should be to the other sex as a wolf to the fold, the sad experience of daily life too often teaches; but that a woman should be false to woman, that all the gentle instincts we love to think feminine, should be debased to treachery and degraded into snares for betrayal, — this is an offence that cries aloud to Heaven!

"No more tea, — none!" cried I, with an energy that nearly made the footman let the tray fall, and so far startled the old lady that she dropped her knitting with a faint cry. As for his Excellency, he had covered his face with the "Globe," and, I believe, was fast asleep.

I looked about for my hat to take my leave, when a sudden thought struck me. "I will stay. I will sit down beside this old creature, and, for once at least in her mis-

erable life, she shall hear from the lips of a man a language that is not that of the debauchee. Who knows what effect one honest word of a true-hearted man may not work? I will try, at all events," said I, and approached her. She did not, as I expected, make room for me on the sofa beside her, and I was, therefore, obliged to take a chair in front. This was so far awkward that it looked formal; it gave somewhat the character of accusation to my position, and I decided to obviate the difficulty by assuming a light, easy, cheerful manner at first, as though I suspected nothing.

"It's a pleasant little capital, this Kalbbratonstadt," said I, as I lay back in my chair.

"Is it?" said she, dryly, without looking up from her work.

"Well, I mean," said I, "it seems to have its reasonable share of resources. They have their theatre, and their music garden, and their promenades, and their drives to—to—"

"You'll find all the names set down there," said she, handing me a copy of Murray's "Handbook" that lay beside her.

"I care less for names than facts, madam," said I, angrily, for her retort had stung me, and routed all my previous intention of a smooth approach to the fortress. "I am one of those unfashionable people who never think the better of vice because it wears French gloves, and goes perfumed with *Ess bouquet*."

She took off her spectacles, wiped them, looked at me, and went on with her work without speaking.

"If I appear abrupt, madam," said I, "in this opening, it is because the opportunity I now enjoy may never occur again, and may be of the briefest even now. We meet by what many would call an accident,—one of those incidents which the thoughtless call chance directed my steps to this place; let me hope that that which seemed a hazard may bear all the fruits of maturest combination, and that the weak words of one frail even as yourself may not be heard by you in vain. Let me, therefore, ask you one question,—only one,—and give me an honest answer to it."

"You are a very singular person," said she, "and seem to have strangely forgotten the very simple circumstance that we meet for the first time now."

"I know it, I feel it; and that it may also be for the last and only time is my reason for this appeal to you. There are persons who, seeing you here, would treat you with a mock deference, address you with a counterfeit respect, and go their ways; who would say to their selfish hearts, 'It is no concern of mine; why should it trouble me?' But I am not one of these. I carry a conscience in my breast; a conscience that holds its daily court, and will even to-morrow ask me, 'Have you been truthful, have you been faithful? When the occasion served to warn a fellow-creature of the shoal before him, did you cry out, "Take soundings! you are in shallow water," or did you with slippery phrases gloss over the peril, because it involved no danger to yourself?'"

"Would that same conscience be kind enough to suggest that your present conduct is an impertinence, sir?"

"So it might, madam; just as the pilot is impertinent when he cries out, 'Hard, port! breakers ahead!'"

"I am therefore to infer, sir," said she, with a calm dignity, "that my approach to a secret danger—of which I can have no knowledge—is a sufficient excuse for the employment of language on your part, that, under a less urgent plea, had been offensive?"

"You are," said I, boldly.

"Speak out, then, sir, and declare what it is."

"Nay, madam, if the warning find no echo within, my words are useless. I have said I would ask you a question."

"Well, sir, do so."

"Will you answer it frankly? Will you give it all the weight and influence it should bear, and reply to it with that truthful spirit that conceals nothing?"

"What is your question, sir? You had better be speedy with it, for I don't much trust to my continued patience."

I arose at this, and, passing behind the back of my chair, leaned my arms on the upper rail, so as to confront her directly; and then, in the voice of an accusing angel, I said, "Old woman, do you know where you are going?"

"I protest, sir," said she, rising, with an indignation I

shall not forget — “I protest, sir, you make me actually doubt if I know where I am!”

“Then let me tell you, madam,” said I, with the voice of one determined to strike terror into her heart — “let me tell you; and may my words have the power to awaken you, even now, to the dreadful consequences of what you are about!”

“Shalley! Shalley!” cried she in amazement, “is this gentleman deranged, or is it but the passing effect of your conviviality?” And with this she swept out of the room, leaving me there alone, for I now perceived — what seemed also to have escaped her — that the Minister had slipped quietly away some time before, and was doubtless at that same moment in the profoundest of slumbers.

I took my departure at once. There was no leave-taking to delay me, and I left the house in a mood little according with the spirit of one who had partaken of its hospitalities; I am constrained to admit I was the very reverse of satisfied with myself. It was cowardly and mean of me to wreak my anger on that old woman, and not upon him who was the really great offender. He it was I should have arraigned; and with the employment of a little artifice and some tact, how terrible I might have made even my jesting levity! how sarcastic my sneers at fashionable vice! Affecting utter ignorance about his life and habits, I could have incidentally thrown out little episodes of all the men who have wrecked their fortunes by abandoned habits. I would have pointed to this man who made a brilliant opening in the House, and that who had acquired such celebrity at the Bar; I would have shown the rising statesman tarnished, the future chief justice disqualified; I would have said, “Let no man, however modest his character or unfrequented his locality, imagine that the world takes no note of his conduct; in every class he is judged by his peers, and you and I, Doubleton, will as assuredly be arraigned before the bar of society as the pickpocket will be charged before the beak!”

I continued to revolve these and such like thoughts throughout the entire night. The wine I had drunk fevered and excited me, and added to that disturbed state which my own self-accusings provoked. Doubts, too, flitted across

my mind whether I ought not to have maintained a perfect silence towards the others, and reserved all my eloquence for the poor girl herself. I imagined myself taking her hand between both mine, while, with averted head, she sobbed as if her heart would break, and, saying, "Be comforted, poor stricken deer! be comforted; I know all. One who is far from perfect himself, sorrows with and compassionates you; he will be your friend, your adviser, your protector. I will restore you to that home you quitted in innocence. I will bring you back to that honeysuckled porch where your pure heart expanded in home affections." Nothing shall equal the refined delicacy of my manner; that mingled reserve and kindness — a sort of cross between a half-brother and a canon of St. Paul's — shall win her over to repentance, and then to peace. How I fancied myself at intervals of time visiting that cottage, going, as the gardener watches some cherished plant, to gaze on the growing strength I had nurtured, and enjoy the luxury of seeing the once drooping flower expanding into fresh loveliness and perfume. "Yes, Potts, this would form one of those episodes you have so often longed to realize." And then I went on to fancy a long heroic struggle between my love and that sentiment of respect for worldly opinion which is dear to every man, the years of conflict wearing me down in health, but exalting me immensely in every moral consideration. Let the hour of crowning victory at last come, I should take her to my bosom and say, "There is rest for thee here!"

"His Excellency begs that you will call at the legation, as early as you can, this morning," said a waiter, entering with the breakfast tray; and I now perceived that I had never gone to bed, or closed my eyes during the night.

"How did this message come?" I asked.

"By the chasseur of his Excellency."

"And how addressed?"

"To the gentleman who dined yesterday at the legation."

I asked these questions to ascertain how far he persisted in the impertinence of giving me a name that was not mine, and I was glad to find that on this occasion no transgression had occurred.

I hesitated considerably about going to him. Was I to accept that slippery morality that says, "I see no more than I please in the man I dine with," or was I to go boldly on and denounce this offender to himself? What if he were to say, "Potts, let us play fair; put your own cards on the table, and let us see are you always on the square? Who is your father? how does he live? Why have you left home, and how? What of that horse you have —"

"No, no, not stolen — on my honor, not stolen!"

"Well, ain't it ugly? Is n't the story one that any relating might, without even a spice of malevolence, make marvellously disagreeable? Is the tale such as you'd wish to herald you into any society you desired to mix with?" It was in this high, easy, and truly companionable style that conscience kept me company, while I ate two eggs and a plate of buttered toast. "After all," thought I, "might it not prove a great mistake not to wait on him? How if, in our talk over politics last night, I may have dropped some remarkable expression, a keen appreciation of some statesman, an extraordinary prediction of some coming crisis? Maybe it is to question me more fully about my 'views' of the state of Europe." Now I am rather given to "views of the state of Europe." I like that game of patience, formed by shuffling up all the governments of the Continent, and then seeing who is to have the most "tricks," who's to win all the kings, and who the knaves. "Yes," thought I, "this is what he is at. These diplomatic people are consummately clever at pumping; their great skill consists in extracting information from others and adapting it to their own uses. Their social condition confers the great advantage of intercourse with whatever is remarkable for station, influence, and ability; and I think I hear his Excellency muttering to himself, 'remarkable man that — large views — great reach of thought — wish I could see more of him; must try what polite attentions may accomplish.' Well," said I, with a half sigh, "it is the old story, *Sic vos non vobis*; and I suppose it is one of the curses on Irishmen that, from Edmund Burke to Potts, they should be doomed to cram others. I will go.

What signifies it to *me*? I am none the poorer in dispensing my knowledge than is the nightingale in discoursing her sweet music to the night air, and flooding the groves with waves of melody: like *her*, I give of an affluence that never fails me." And so I set out for the legation.

As I walked along through the garden, a trimly-dressed French maid passed me, turned, and repassed, with a look that had a certain significance. "It was monsieur dined here yesterday?" said she, interrogatively; and as I smiled assent, she handed me a very small sealed note, and disappeared.

It bore no address but the word "Mr.—;" a strange, not very ceremonious direction. "But, poor girl!" thought I, "she knows me not as Potts, but as Protector. I am not the individual, but the representative of that wide-spread benevolence that succors the weak and consoles the afflicted. I wonder has she been touched by my devotion? has she imagined — oh, that she would! — that I have followed her hither, that I have sworn a vow to rescue and to save her? Or is this note the cry of a sorrow-struck spirit, saying, 'Come to my aid ere I perish'?"

My fingers trembled as I broke the seal; I had to wipe a tear from my eye ere I could begin to read. My agitation was great; it was soon to be greater. The note contained very few words; they were these:—

"SIR,—I have not communicated to my brother, Sir Shalley Doubleton, any circumstance of your unaccountable conduct yesterday evening. I hope that my reserve will be appreciated by you, and

"I am, your faithful servant,

"MARTHA KEATS."

I did not faint, but I sat down on the grass, sick and faint, and I felt the great drops of cold perspiration burst out over my forehead and temples. "So," muttered I, "the venerable person I have been lecturing is his Excellency's own sister! My exhortations to a changed life have been addressed to a lady doubtless as rigid in morals as austere in manners." Though I could recall none of the

words I employed, I remembered but too well the lesson I intended to convey, and I shuddered with disgust at my own conduct. Many a time have I heard severest censure on the preacher who has from the pulpit scattered words of doubtful application to the sinners beneath; but here was I making a direct and most odious attack upon the life and habits of a lady of immaculate behavior! Oh, it was too — too bad! A whole year of sackcloth and ashes would not be penance for such iniquity. How could she have forgiven it? What consummate charity enabled her to pardon an offence so gross and so gratuitous? Or is it that she foresaw consequences so grave, in the event of disclosure, that she dreaded to provoke them? What might not an angry brother, in such a case, be warranted in doing? Would the world call any vengeance exorbitant? I studied her last phrase over and over, "I hope my reserve will be appreciated by you." This may mean, "I reserve the charge, — I hold it over you as a bail bond for the future; diverge ever so little from the straight road, and I will say, 'Potts, stand forward and listen to your indictment.' She may have some terrible task in view for me, some perilous achievement, which I cannot now refuse. This old woman may be to me as was the Old Man of the Sea to Sinbad. I may be fated to carry her forever on my back, and the dread of her be a living nightmare to me. "At such a price, existence has no value," said I, in despair. "Worse even than the bondage is the feeling that I am no longer, to my own heart, the great creature I love to think myself. Instead of Potts the generous, the high-spirited, the confiding, the self-denying, I am Potts the timorous, the terror-stricken, and the slave."

Out of my long and painful musings on the subject, I bethought me of a course to take. I would go to her and say: —

"Listen to this parable. I remember once, when a member of the phrenological club, a stupid jest was played off upon the society by some one presenting us with the cast of a well-known murderer's skull, and asking for our interpretations of its development. We gave them with every care and deliberation: we pointed out the fatal pro-

tuberances of crime, and indicated the depressions, which showed the absence of all prudential restraints; we demonstrated all the evidences of badness that were there, and proved that, with such a head, a man must have thought killing no murder. The rejoinder to our politeness was a small box that arrived by the mail, labelled, 'the original of the cast forwarded on the 14th.' We opened it, and found a pumpkin! The foolish jester fancied that he had cast an indelible stain upon phrenology, quite forgetting the fact that his pumpkin had personated a skull which, had it ever existed, would have presented the characteristics we gave it." I would say, "Now, madam, make the application, and say, do you not rather commend than condemn? are you not more ready to applaud than upbraid me?"

Second thoughts rather deterred me from this plan; the figurative line is often dangerous with elderly people. It is just as likely she would mistake the whole force of my illustration, and bluntly say, "I'd beg to remark, sir, I am not a pumpkin!"

"No; I will not adventure on this path. There is no need that I should ever meet her again, or, if I should, we may meet as utter strangers." This resolve made, I arose boldly, and walked on towards the house.

His Excellency, I learned, was at home, and had been for some time expecting me. I found him in his morning room, in the same costume and same occupation as on the day before.

"There's the 'Times,'" said he, as I entered; "I shall be ready for you presently;" and worked away without lifting his head.

Affecting to read, I set myself to regard him with attention. Vast piles of papers lay around him on every side; the whole table, and even the floor at his feet, was littered with them. "Would," thought I, — "would that these writers for the Radical press, these scurrilous penny-a-liners who inveigh against a bloated and pampered aristocracy, could just witness the daily life of labor of one of these spoiled children of Fortune. Here is this man, doubtless reared in ease and affluence, and see him, how he toils away, from sundown to dawn, unravelling the schemes, tracing the wiles, and exposing the snares of these crafty foreigners.

Hark! he is muttering over the subtle sentence he has just written: 'I am much grieved about Maria's little girl, but I hope she will escape being marked by the malady.'" A groan that broke from me here startled him, and he looked up.

"Ah! yes, by the way, I want you, Paynter."

"I am not Paynter, your Excellency, my name is —"

"Of course, you have your own name for your own peculiar set; but don't interrupt. I have a special service for you, and will put it in the 'extraordinaries.' I have taken a little villa on the Lake of Como for my sister, but, from the pressure of political events, I am not able to accompany her there. She is a very timid traveller, and cannot possibly go alone. You'll take charge of her, therefore, Paynter, — there, don't be fussy, — you'll take charge of her and a young lady who is with her, and you'll see them housed and established there. I suppose she will prefer to travel slowly, some thirty miles or so a day, post horses always, and strictly avoiding railroads; but you can talk it over together yourselves. There was a Bobus to have come out —"

"A Bobus!"

"I mean a doctor, — I call every doctor, Bobus, — but something has detained him, or, indeed, I believe he was drowned; at all events, he's not come, and you'll have to learn how to measure out ether and drop morphine; the 'companion' will help you. And keep an account of your expenses, Paynter, — your own expenses for F. O., — and don't let her fall sick at any out-of-the-way place, which she has rather a knack of doing; and, above all, don't telegraph on any account. Come and dine, — six."

"If you will excuse me at dinner, I shall be obliged. I have a sort of half engagement."

"Come in about nine, then," said he, "for she'd like to talk over some matters. Look out for a carriage, too; I don't fancy giving mine if you can get another. One of those great roomy German things with a cabriolet front, for Miss — I forget her name — would prefer a place outside. Kramm, the landlord, can help you to search for one; and let it be dusted and aired and fumigated and the drag examined and the axles greased, — in a word, have your brains about you, Paynter. Good-bye." Exit as before.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNPLEASANT TURN TO AN AGREEABLE CONVERSE.

THERE is no denying it, I have led a life of far more than ordinary happiness. The white squares in the checker of my existence have certainly equalled the black ones, and it is not every man can say as much. I suspect I owe a great share of this enjoyment to temperament, to a disposition not so much remarkable for opposing difficulties as for deriving all the possible pleasure from any fortunate conjuncture. This gift I know I possess. I am not one of those strong natures which, by their intrinsic force, are ever impressing their own image on the society they live in. I am a weak, frail, yielding creature, but my very pliancy has given me many a partnership in emotions which, with a more rugged temperament, I had not partaken of. When one has wept over a friend's misfortunes and awakes to the consciousness that no ill has befallen himself, he feels as some great millionaire might feel who has bestowed a thousand pounds in charity and yet knows he is never the poorer. With the proud consciousness of this fresh title to men's admiration, he has the secret satisfaction of knowing that he will go clothed in purple as before, and fare to-day as sumptuously as yesterday. Do you, most generous of readers, call this selfishness? It is the very reverse. It is the grand culminating point of human sympathy.

I have a great deal more to say about myself. It is a theme I am really fond of, but I am not exactly sure that you are like-minded, or that this is the fittest place for it. I return to events.

It was on a bright, breezy morning of the early autumn that a heavy old German travelling-carriage, — a wagon! — rattled over the uneven pavement of Kalbratonsstadt,

and soon gaining one of the long forest alleys, rolled noiselessly over the smooth sward. Within sat an elderly lady with a due allowance of air-cushions, toy-terriers, and guide-books; in the rumble were a man and a maid; and in the cabriolet in front were a pale but placid girl, with large gray eyes and long lashes, and he who now writes these lines beside her. They who had only known me a few months back as a freshman of Trinity would not have recognized me now, as I sat with a long-peaked travelling-cap, a courier's belt and bag at my side, and the opening promise of a small furry moustache on my upper lip; not to say that I had got up a sort of supercilious air of contemptuous pity for the foreigner, which I had observed to be much in favor with the English abroad. It cost me dear to do this, and nothing but the consciousness that it was one of the requirements of my station could have made me assume it, for in my heart of hearts, I revelled in enjoyment of all around me. I liked the soft breezy balmy air, the mellow beech wood, the grassy turf overgrown with violets, the wild notes of the frightened wood-pigeon, the very tramp-tramp of the massive horses, with their scarlet tassels and their jingling bells; all pleased and interested me. Not to speak of her, who, at my side, felt a very child's delight at every novelty of the way.

"What would I have said to any one who, only a fortnight ago, had promised me such happiness as this?" said I to my companion, as we drove along, while the light branches rustled pleasantly over the roof of the carriage, darkening the shade around us, or occasionally deluging us with the leaves as we passed.

"And are you then so very happy?" asked she, with a pleasant smile.

"Can you doubt it? or rather is it that, as the emotion does not extend to yourself, you *do* doubt it?"

"Oh, as for me," cried she, joyfully, "it is very different. I have never travelled till now—seen nothing, actually nothing. The veriest commonplaces of the road, the peasants' costumes, their wayside cottages, the little shrines they kneel at, are all objects of picturesque interest to me, and I am ready to exclaim at each moment, 'Oh! why cannot we

stop here? shall we ever see anything so beautiful again as this?"

"And hearing you talk thus, you can ask me am I so very happy!" said I, reproachfully.

"What I meant was, is it not stupid to have no companion of your own turn of mind, none with whom you could talk, without condescending to a tone beneath you, just as certain stories are reduced to words of one syllable for little children?"

"Mademoiselle is given to sarcasm, I see," said I, half peevishly.

"Nothing of the kind," said she, blushing slightly. "It was in perfect good faith. I wished you a more suitable companion. Indeed, after what I had heard from his Excellency about you, I was terrified at the thought of my own insufficiency."

"And pray what *did* he say of me?" asked I, in a flutter of delight.

"Are you very fond of flattery?"

"Immensely!"

"Is it not possible that praise of you could be so exaggerated as to make you feel ashamed?"

"I should say, perfectly impossible; that is, to a mind regulated as mine, over-elation could never happen. Tell me, therefore, what he said?"

"I can't remember one-half of it; he remarked how few men in the career — I conclude he meant diplomacy — could compare with you; that you had such just views about the state of Europe, such an accurate appreciation of public men. I can't say how many opportunities you must n't have had, and what valuable uses you have not put them to. In a word, I felt that I was about to travel with a great statesman and a consummate man of the world, and was terrified accordingly."

"And now that the delusion is dispelled, how do you feel?"

"But is it dispelled? Am I not shocked with my own temerity in daring to talk thus lightly with one so learned?"

"If so," said I, "you conceal your embarrassment wonderfully."

And then we both laughed; but I am not quite sure it was at the same joke.

"Do you know where you are going?" said I, taking out a travelling-map as a means of diverting our conversation into some higher channel.

"Not in the least."

"Nor care?"

"Nor care."

"Well, I must say, it is a most independent frame of mind. Perhaps you could extend this fine philosophy, and add, 'Nor with whom!'"

I was not at all conscious of what an impertinence I had uttered till it was out; nor, indeed, even then, till I remarked that her cheek had become scarlet, and her eyes double as dark as their wont.

"Yes," said she, "there is one condition for which I should certainly stipulate, — not to travel with any one who could needlessly offend me."

I could have cried with shame; I could have held my hand in the flame of a fire to expiate my rude speech. And so I told her; while I assured her at the same time, with marvellous consistency, that it was not rude at all; that it was entirely misconception on her part; that *nous autres diplomates* — Heaven forgive me the lying assumption! — had a way of saying little smartnesses that don't mean much; that we often made our coin ring on the table, though it turned out bad money when it came to be looked at; that Talleyrand did it, and Walewsky did it, and I did it, — we all did it!

Now, there was one most unlucky feature in all this. It was only a few minutes before this passage occurred, that I said to myself, "Potts, here is one whose frank, fresh, generous nature claims all your respect and devotion. No nonsense of your being this, that, and t'other here. Be truthful and be honest; neither pretend to be man of fortune nor man of fashion; own fairly to her by what chance you adventured upon this strange life; tell her, in a word, you are the son of Potts, — Potts the 'pothecary, — and neither a hero nor a plenipotentiary!"

I have no doubt, most amiable of readers, that nothing

can seem possibly more easy than to have done all this. You deem it the natural and ordinary course; just as, for instance, a merchant in good credit and repute would feel no repugnance to calling all his creditors together to inspect his books, and see that, though apparently solvent, he was, in truth, utterly bankrupt. And yet there is some difficulty in doing this. Does not the law of England expressly declare that no man need criminate himself? Who accuses you, then, Potts? And then I bethought me of the worthy old alderman, who, on learning that "Robinson Crusoe" was a fiction, exclaimed, "It may be so; but I have lost the greatest pleasure of my life in hearing it." What a profound philosophy was there in that simple avowal! With what illusions are we not cheered on through life! how unreal the joys that delight and the triumphs that elate us; for we are all hypochondriacs, and are as often cured with bread pills as with bold remedies. "Yes," thought I, "this young girl is happy in the thought that her companion is a person of rank, station, and influence; she feels a sort of self-elation in being associated with one endowed with all worldly advantages. Shall I rob her of this illusion? Shall I rudely deprive her of what imparts a charm to her existence, and gives a sort of romantic interest to her daily life? Harsh and needless would be the cruelty!"

While I thus argued with myself, she had opened her guide-book, and was eagerly reading away about the road we were travelling. "We are to halt at Bömerstein, are we not?" asked she.

"Yes," said I, "we rest there for the night. It is one of those little villages of which a German writer has given us a striking picture."

"Auerstadt," broke she in.

"So you have read him? You read German?"

"Yes, tolerably; that is, well enough for Schiller and Uhland, but not well enough for Jean Paul and Goethe."

"Never mind; trust me for a guide; you shall now venture upon both."

"But how will you be able to give up time valuable as yours to such teachings? Would it be fair of me, besides, to steal hours that ought to be devoted to your country?"

Though I had not the slightest imaginable ground to suspect any secret sarcasm in this speech, my guilty conscience made me feel it as a perfect torture. "She knows me," thought I, "and this sneer at my pretended importance is intended to overwhelm me."

"As to my country's claims," said I, haughtily, "I make light of them. All that I have seen of life only shows the shallowness of what is called the public service. I am resolved to leave it, and forever."

"And for what?"

"A life of retirement, — obscurity if you will."

"It is what I should do if I were a man."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I have often reflected over the delight I have felt in walking through some man's demesne, revelling in the enjoyment of its leafy solitude, its dreary shade, its sunlit vistas, and I have thought, 'If all these things, not one of which are mine, can bring such pleasure to my heart, why should I not adopt the same philosophy in life, and be satisfied with enjoying without possessing? A very humble lot would suffice for one, nothing but great success could achieve the other.'"

"What becomes, then, of that great stimulus to good they call labor?"

"Oh, I should labor, too. I'd work at whatever I was equal to. I'd sew, and knit, and till my garden, and be as useful as possible."

"And I would write," said I, enthusiastically, as though I were plotting out my share in this garden of Eden. "I would write all sorts of things: reviews, and histories, and stories, and short poems, and, last of all, the 'Confessions of Algernon Sydney Potts.'"

"Oh, what a shocking title! How could such names have met together? That shocking epithet Potts would vulgarize it all!"

"I really cannot agree with you," said I, angrily.

"Without," said she, "you meant it for a sort of quiz; and that Potts was to be a creature of absurdity and folly, a pretender and a snob."

I felt as if I was choking with passion; but I tried to laugh, and say, "Yes, of course."

"That would be good fun enough," went she on. "I'd like, if I could, to contribute to that. You should invent the situations, and leave me occasionally to supply the reflective part."

"It would be charming; quite delightful."

"Shall we do it, then? Let us try it, by all means. We might begin by imagining Potts in search of this, that, or t'other, — love, happiness, solitude, climate, scenery, anything, in short. Let us fancy him on a journey, try and personate him; that would be the real way. Do you, for instance, be Potts, and I'll be his sister Susan. It will be the best fun in the world, as we go along, to see everything, note everything, and discuss everything Potts-wise."

"It would be too ridiculous, too absurd," said I, sick with anger.

"Not a bit; we are travelling with our old grandmother, we are making the tour of Europe, and keeping our journal. Every evening we compare notes of what we have seen. Pray do so; I'm quite wild to try it."

"Really," said I, gravely, "it is a sort of trifling I should find it very difficult to descend to. I see no reason, besides, to associate the name of Potts with what you are pleased to call snobbery!"

"Could you help it? Could you, with all the best will in the world, make Potts a man of distinction? Would n't he, in spite of you, be low, vulgar, inquisitive, and obtrusive? Would n't you find him thrusting himself forward, twenty times a day, into positions he had no right to? Would n't the creature be a butt and a dupe —"

"Shall I own," burst I in, "that it gives me no exalted idea of your taste, if I find that you select for ridicule a person on the mere showing that his name is a monosyllable? And, once for all, I repudiate all share in the scheme, and beg that I may not hear more of it."

I turned away as I said this. She resumed her book, and we spoke no more to each other till we reached our halting-place for the night.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. KEATS MOVES MY INDIGNATION.

I AM forced to the confession, Mrs. Keats was not what is popularly called an agreeable old lady. She spoke seldom, she smiled never, and she had a way of looking at you, a sort of cold astonishment, seeming to say, "How is this? explain yourself," that kept me in a perpetual terror.

My morning's tiff with Miss Herbert had neither been condoned nor expiated when we sat down to dinner, as stiff a party of three as can well be imagined; scarcely a word was interchanged as we ate.

"If you drink wine, sir, pray order it," said Mrs. Keats to me, in a voice that might have suited an invitation to prussic acid.

"This little wine of the country is very pleasant, madam," said I, courteously, "and I can even venture to recommend it."

"Not to me, sir. I drink water."

"Perhaps Miss Herbert will allow me?"

"Excuse me; I also drink water."

After a very dreary and painful pause, I dared to express a faint hope that Mrs. Keats had not been fatigued by the day's journey.

She looked at me for a second or two before replying, and then said: "I am really not aware, sir, that I have manifested any such signs of weariness as would warrant your inquiry. If I should have, however —"

"Oh, I beg you will pardon me, madam," broke I in, apologetically; "my question was not meant for more than a mere ordinary politeness, a matter-of-course expression of my solicitude."

"It will save us both some trouble in future, sir, if I remark that I am no friend to matter-of-course civilities, and never reply to them."

I felt as though my head and face had been passed across the open door of a blast furnace. I was in a perfect flame, and dared not raise my eye from my plate.

"The waiter is asking if you will take coffee, sir," said the inexorable old lady to me, as I sat almost stunned and stupid.

"Yes — with brandy — a full glass of brandy in it," cried I, in the half-despair of one who knew not how to rally himself.

"I think we may retire, Miss H.," said Mrs. Keats, rising with a severe dignity that seemed to say, "We are not bound to assist at an orgy." And with a stern stare and a defiant little bow she moved towards the door. I was so awestruck that I never moved from my place, but stood resting my hand on my chair, till she said, "Do you mean to open the door, sir, or am I to do it for myself?"

I sprang forward at once, and flung it wide, my face all scarlet with shame.

She passed out, and Miss Herbert followed her. Her dress, however, catching in the doorway, she turned back to extricate it; I seized the moment to stoop down and say, "Do let me see you for one moment this evening, — only one moment."

She shook her head in silent negative, and went away.

I sat down at the table, and filled myself a large goblet of wine; I drank it off, and replenished it. It was only this morning, a few brief hours ago, and I would not have changed fortunes with the Emperor of France. Life seemed to open before me like some beautiful alley in a garden, with a glorious vista in the distance. I would not have bartered the place in that cabriolet for the proudest throne in Europe. *She* was there beside me, listening in rapt attention, as I discoursed voyages, travels, memoirs, poetry, and personal adventures. With every changeable expression of lovely sympathy did she follow me through all. I was a hero to us both, myself as much captivated as she was; and now the brief drama was over, the lights

were put out, and the theatre closed! How had I destroyed this golden delusion, — why had I quarrelled with her, and for what? For a certain Potts, a creature who, in reality, had no existence; “For who is Potts?” said I. “Potts is no more a substance than Caleb Williams or Peregrine Pickle; Potts is the lay figure that the artist dresses in any costume he requires — a *Rachero* to-day, a *Railway Director* to-morrow. What an absurdity in the importance we lend to mere names! Here, for instance, I take the label off the port, and I hang it round the neck of the claret decanter: have I changed the quality of the vintage? have I brought *Bordeaux* to the meridian of *Oporto*? Not a bit of it. And yet a man is to be more the victim of an accident than a bottle of wine, and his intrinsic qualities — strength, flavor, and richness — are not to be tested, but simply implied from the label round his neck! How narrow-minded, after all, of her, who ought to have known better! It is thus, however, we educate our women; this is part and parcel of the false system by which we fancy we make them companionable. The North American Indians are far in advance of us in all this: they assign them their proper places and fitting duties; they feel that, in this life of ours, order and happiness depend on the due distribution of burdens, and the Snapping Alligator never feels his squaw more truly his helpmate than when she is skinning eels for his dinner.”

How I hated that old woman; I don't think I ever detested a human creature so much as that. I have often speculated as to whether venomous reptiles have any gratification imparted to them when they inflict a poisonous wound. Is the mosquito the happier for having stung one's nose? And, in the same spirit, I should like to know, do the disagreeable people of this world sleep the better from the consciousness of having offended us? Is there that great ennobling sense of a mission fulfilled for every cheek they set on fire and every heart they depress? and do they quench hope and extinguish ambition with the same zeal that the Sun or the Phoenix put out a fire?

“If you drink wine, sir, pray order it,” said I, mimicking her imperious tone. “Yes, madam, I do drink wine,

and I mean to order it, and liberally. I travel at the expense of that noble old paymaster who only wags his tail the more, the more he has to pay — the British Lion. I go down in the extraordinaries. I'm on what is called a special service. 'Keep an account of your expenses, Paynter!' Confound his insolence, he would say 'Paynter.' By the way, I have never looked how he calls me in my passport. I'm curious to see if I be Paynter there." I had left the bag containing this and my money in my room, and I rang the bell, and told the waiter to fetch it.

The passport set forth in due terms all the dignities, honors, and decorations of the great man who granted it, and who bespoke for the little man who travelled by it all aid and assistance possible, and to let him pass freely, &c. "Mr. Ponto, — British subject." "'Ponto!'" What an outrage! This comes of a man making his *maître d'hôtel* his secretary. That stupid French flunkey has converted me into a water-dog. This may explain a good deal of the old lady's rudeness; how could she be expected to be even ordinarily civil to a man called Ponto? She'd say at once, 'His father was an Italian, and, of course, a courier, or a valet; or he was a foundling, and called after a favorite spaniel.' I'll rectify this without loss of time. If she has not the tact to discover the man of education and breeding by the qualities he displays in intercourse, she shall be brought to admit them by the demands of his self-respect."

I opened my writing-desk and wrote just two lines, — a polite request for a few moments of interview, signed "A. S. Pottinger." I wrote the name in a fine text hand, as though to say, "No more blunders, madam, this is large as print."

"Take this to your mistress, François," said I to the courier.

"Gone to bed, sir."

"Gone to bed! why, it's only eight o'clock."

A shrug and a smile were all he replied.

"And Miss Herbert, — can I speak to *her*?"

"Fear not, sir; she went to her room, and told Clementina not to disturb her."

"It is of consequence, however, that I should see her. I

want to make arrangements for to-morrow, — the hour we are to start —”

“Oh! but we are to stop here over to-morrow; I thought monsieur knew that,” said the fellow, with the insolent grin of a menial at knowing more than his betters.

“Oh, to be sure we are,” said I, laughingly, and affecting to have suddenly remembered it. “I forgot all about it, François; you are quite right. Take a glass of wine, François, — or take the bottle with you, that’s better.” And I handed him a flask of Hocheimer of eight florins, right glad to get rid of his presence and escape further scrutiny from his prying glances.

How relieved I felt when the fellow closed the door after him and left me to “blow off the steam” of my indignation all alone! And was I not indignant? Only to fancy this insolent old woman giving her orders without so much as condescending to communicate with me! I am left to learn her whim by a mere accident, or not learn it at all, and exhibit myself ready to depart at the inn door, and then hear, for the first time, that I may unpack again.

This was unquestionably a studied rudeness, and demanded an equally studied reprisal. She means to discredit my station, and disparage my influence; how shall I reply to her? A vast variety of expedients offered themselves to my mind: I could go off, leaving a fearful letter behind me, — a document that would cut her to the very soul with the sarcastic bitterness of its tone; but could I leave without a reconciliation with Miss Herbert, — without the fond hope of our meeting as friends. I meant a great deal more, though I would n’t trust myself to say so. Besides, were I to go away, there were financial considerations to be entertained. I could not, of course, carry off that crimson bag with its gold and silver contents, and yet it was very hard to tear myself from such a treasure.

I say it under correction, for I have never been rich, and, consequently, never in the position to assert it positively; but I declare my firm conviction to be that no man has ever tasted the unbounded pleasures of a careless liberality on a journey, who has not travelled at some other person’s expense. Be as wealthy as you like, let your portmanteau be

stuffed full of circular notes, and there will be present at moments of payment the thought, "If I do not allow myself to be cheated here, I shall have all the more to squander there." But, drawing from the bag of another, no such mean reflection obtrudes. You might as well defraud your lungs of a long inspiration out of the fear of taking more than your share of the atmosphere. There is enough, and will be enough there when you are dust and ashes.

In fact, if I had on one side the "three courses" of the great statesman, I had on the other full thirty reasons against each, and, therefore, I resolved to suspend action and do nothing. And let me here passingly remark that, much as we hear every day about the merits of promptitude and quick-wittedness, in nine cases out of ten in life, I'd rather "give the move than take it." The waiting policy is a rare one; it is the secret of success in love, and of victory in an equity court. And so I determined I'd wait and see what should come of it. I appealed to myself thus: "Potts, you are eminently a man of the world, one who accepts life as it is, with all its crosses and untoward incidents; who knows well that he must play bad cards even oftener than good ones. No impatience, therefore, no rashness; give at least twenty-four hours' thought to any important decision, and let a night's sleep intervene between your first conception of a plan and its adoption." Oh, if the people who are fretting themselves about what is to happen this day ten years, would only remember what a long time it is, — that is, counting by the number of events that will occur between this and to-morrow, — not to say what incidents are happening at the antipodes that will yet bring joy or sorrow to their hearts, — they would keep more of their sympathies for present use, and perhaps be the happier for doing so.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN IMPATIENT SUMMONS.

I AM about to make a very original observation. I hope its truth may equal its originality. It is, that the man who has never had a sister is, at his first entrance into life, far more the slave of feminine captivations than he who has been brought up in a "house full of girls." "Oh, for shame, Mr. Potts! Is this the gallantry we have heard so much of? Is this the spirit of that chivalrous devotion you have been incessantly impressing upon us?" Wait a moment, fair creature; give me one half-minute for an explanation. He who has not had sisters has had no experiences of the behind-scene life of the female world; he has never heard one syllable about the plans and schemes and devices by which hearts are snared. He fancies Mary stuck that moss-rose in her hair in a moment of childish caprice; that Kate ran after her little sister and showed the prettiest of ankles in doing it, out of the irrepressible gayety of her buoyant spirits. In a word, he is one who only sees the play when the house is fully lighted, and all the actors in their grand costume; he has never witnessed a rehearsal, and has not the very vaguest suspicion of a prompter.

To him, therefore, who has only experienced the rough companionship of brothers — or worse still, has lived entirely alone — the first acquaintanceship with the young-lady world is such a fascination as no words can describe. The gentle look, the graceful gestures, the silvery voices, all the play and action of natures so infinitely more refined than any he has ever witnessed, are inexpressibly captivating. It is not alone the occupations of their hours, light, graceful, and picturesque as they are, but all their topics, their thoughts, seem to soar out of the commonplace world he has

lived in, and rise to ideal realms of poetry and beauty. I say it advisedly: I do not know of anything so truly Elysian in life as our first—our very first—experiences of this kind.

Werther's passion for Charlotte received a powerful impulse from watching her as she cut bread-and-butter for the children. There are vulgar natures who will smile at this; who cannot enter into the intense far-sightedness of that poetic conception; that could in one trait of simplicity embody a whole lifetime with its ennobling duties, its cheerful sacrifices, its gracefully borne cares. Let him, therefore, who could sneer at Werther, scoff at Potts, as he owns that he never felt his heart so powerfully drawn to Kate Herbert as when he watched her making tea for breakfast. Dressed in a muslin that represented mourning, her rich hair plainly enclosed in a net, with a noiseless motion, she glided about, an ideal of gentle sadness, more fascinating than I can tell. If she bore any unpleasant memory of our little difference, she did not show it; her manner was calm and even kind. She felt, perhaps, that some compensation was due to me for the rudeness of that old woman, and was not unwilling to make it.

"You know we are to rest here to-day?" said she, as she busied herself at the table.

"I heard it by a mere chance, and from the courier," said I, peevishly. "I am not quite certain in what capacity Mrs. Keats condescends to regard me, that I am treated with such scant courtesy. Probably you would be kind enough to ascertain this point for me?"

"I shall assuredly not ask," said she, with a smile.

"I certainly promised her brother—I could not do less for a colleague, not to say something more—that I'd see this old lady safe over the Alps. They are looking out for me anxiously enough at Constantinople all this while; in fact, I suspect there will be a nice confusion there through my delay, and I'd not be a bit surprised if they begin to believe that stupid story in the 'Nord.' I suppose you saw it?"

"No. What is it about?"

"It is about your humble servant, Miss Herbert, and

hints that he has received one hundred purses from the sheiks of the Lebanon not to reach the Golden Horn before they have made their peace with the Grand Vizier."

"And is of course untrue?"

"Of course, every word of it is a falsehood; but there are *gobemouchés* will believe anything. Mark my words, and see if this allegation be not heard in the House of Commons, and some Tower Hamlets member start up to ask if the Foreign Secretary will lay on the table copies of the instructions given to a certain person, and supposed to be credentials of a nature to supersede the functions of our ambassador at the Porte. In confidence, between ourselves, Miss Herbert, so they are! I am intrusted with full powers about the Hatti Homayoun, as the world shall see in good time."

"Do you take your tea strong?" asked she; and there was something so odd and so inopportune in the question, that I felt it as a sort of covert sneer; but when I looked up and beheld that pale and gentle face turned towards me, I banished the base suspicion, and forgetting all my enthusiasm, said, —

"Yes, dearest; strong as brandy!"

She tried to look grave, perhaps angry; but in spite of herself, she burst out a-laughing.

"I perceive, sir," said she, "that Mrs. Keats was quite correct when she said that you appear to have moments in which you are unaware of what you say."

Before I could rally to reply, she had poured out a cup of tea for Mrs. Keats, and left the room to carry it to her.

"'Moments in which I am unaware of what I say,' — 'incoherent intervals' Forbes Winslow would call them: in plain English, I am mad. Old woman, have you dared to cast such an aspersion on me, and to disparage me, too, in the quarter where I am striving to achieve success? For her opinion of me I am less than indifferent; for her judgment of my capacity, my morals, my manners, I am as careless as I well can be of anything; but these become serious disparagements when they reach the ears of one whose heart I would make my own. I will insist on an

explanation — no, but an apology — for this. She shall declare that she used these words in some non-natural sense, — that I am the sanest of mortals: she shall give it under her hand and seal: ‘I, the undersigned, having in a moment of rash and impatient judgment imputed to the bearer of this document, Algernon Sydney Potts,’ — no, Pottinger — ha, there is a difficulty! If I be Pottinger, I can never re-become Potts; if Potts, I am lost, — or rather, Miss Herbert is lost to me forever. What a dire embarrassment! Not to mention that in the passport I was Ponto!”

“Mrs. Keats desired me to beg you will step up to her room after breakfast, and bring your account-books with you.” This was said by Miss Herbert as she entered and took her place at the table.

“What has the old woman got in her head?” said I, angrily. “I have no account-books, — I never had such in my life. When I travel alone, I say to my courier, ‘Diomedes’ — he is a Greek — ‘Diomedes, pay;’ and he pays. When Diomedes is not with me, I ask, ‘How much?’ and I give it.”

“It certainly simplifies travel,” said she, gravely.

“It does more, Miss Herbert: it accomplishes the end of travel. Your doctor says, ‘Go abroad, — take a holiday — turn your back on Downing Street, and bid farewell to cabinet councils.’ Where is the benefit of such a course, I ask, if you are to pass the vacation cursing custom-house officers, bullying landlords, and browbeating waiters? I say always, ‘Give me a bad dinner if you must, but do not derange my digestion; rather a damp bed than thorns in the pillow.’”

“I am to say that you will see her, however,” said she, with that matter-of-fact adhesiveness to the question that never would permit her to join in my digressions.

“Then I go under protest, Miss Herbert, — under protest, and, as the lawyers say, without prejudice, — that is, I go as a private gentleman, irresponsible and independent. Tell her this, and say, I know nothing of figures: arithmetic may suit the Board of Trade; in the Foreign Department we ignore it. You may add, too, if you like, that

from what you have seen of me, I am of a haughty disposition, easily offended, and very vindictive, — very!”

“But I really don’t think this,” said she, with a bewitching smile.

“Not to *you*, de—” I was nearly in it again: “not to *you*,” said I, stammering and blushing till I felt on fire. I suspect that she saw all the peril of the moment, for she left the room hurriedly, on the pretext of asking Mrs. Keats to take more tea.

“She is sensible of your devotion, Potts; but is she touched by it? Has she said to herself, ‘That man is my fate, my destiny, — it is no use resisting him; dark and mysterious as he is, I am drawn towards him by an inscrutable sympathy’ — or is she still struggling in the toils, muttering to her heart to be still, and to wait? Flutter away, gentle creature,” said I, compassionately, “but ruffle not your lovely plumage too roughly; the bars of your cage are not the less impassable that they are invisible. You *shall* love me, and you *shall* be mine!”

To these rapturous fancies there now succeeded the far less captivating thought of Mrs. Keats, and an approaching interview. Can any reader explain why it is, that one sits in quiet admiration of some old woman by Teniers or Holbein, and never experiences any chagrin or impatience at trials which, if only represented in life, would be positively odious? Why is it that art transcends nature, and that ugliness in canvas is more endurable than ugliness in the flesh? Now, for my own part, I’d rather have faced a whole gallery of the Dutch school, from Van Eyck to Verhagen, than have confronted that one old lady who sat awaiting me in No. 12.

Twice as I sat at my breakfast did François put in his head, look at me, and retire without a word. “What is the matter? What do you mean?” cried I, impatiently, at the third intrusion.

“It is madam that wishes to know when monsieur will be at leisure to go upstairs to her.”

I almost bounded on my chair with passion. How was I, I would ask, to maintain any portion of that dignity with which I ought to surround myself if exposed to such

demands as this? This absurd old woman would tear off every illusion in which I draped myself. What availed all the romance a rich fancy could conjure up, when that wicked old enchantress called me to her presence, and in a voice of thunder said, "Strip off these masqueradings, Potts, I know the whole story." "Ay, but," thought I, "she cannot do so; of me and my antecedents she knows positively nothing." "Halt there!" interposes Conscience; "it is quite enough to pronounce the coin base, without being able to say at what mint it was fabricated. She knows you, Potts, she knows you."

There is one great evil in castle-building, and I have thought very long and anxiously, and I must own fruitlessly, over how to meet it: it is that one never can get a lease of the ground to build on. One is always like an Irish cottier, a tenant at will, likely to be turned out at a moment's notice, and dispossessed without pity or compassion. The same language applies to each: "You know well, my good fellow, you had no right to be there; pack up and be off!" It's no use saying that it was a bit of waste land unfenced and untilled; that, until you took it in hand, it was overgrown with nettles and duckweed; that you dispossessed no one, and such like. The answer is still the same, "Where's your title? Where's your lease?"

Now, I am curious to hear what injury I was inflicting on that old woman at No. 12 by any self-deceptions of mine? Could the most exaggerated estimate I might form of myself, my present, or my future, in any degree affect *her*? Who constituted her a sort of ambulatory conscience, to call people's hearts to account at a moment's notice? It may be seen by the tone of these reflections, that I was fully impressed with the belief through some channel, or by some clew, Mrs. Keats knew all my history, and intended to use her knowledge tyrannically over me.

Oh that I could only retaliate! Oh that I had only the veriest fragment of her past life, out of which to construct her whole story! Just as out of a mastodon's molar, Cuvier used to build up the whole monster, never omitting a rib, nor forgetting a vertebra! How I should like to say to her, and with a most significant sigh, "I knew poor Keats

well!" Could I not make even these simple words convey a world of accusation, blended with sorrow and regret?

François again, and on the same errand. "Say I am coming; that I have only finished a hasty breakfast, and that I am coming this instant," cried I. Nor was it very easy for me to repress the more impatient expressions which struggled for utterance, particularly as I saw, or fancied I saw, the fellow pass his hand over his mouth to hide a grin at my expense.

"Is Miss Herbert upstairs?"

"No, sir, she is in the garden."

This was so far pleasant. I dreaded the thought of her presence at this interview, and I felt that punishment within the precincts of the jail was less terrible than on the drop before the populace; and with this consoling reflection I mounted the stairs.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. KEATS'S MYSTERIOUS COMMUNICATION.

I KNOCKED twice before I heard the permission to enter; but scarcely had I closed the door behind me, than the old lady advanced, and, courtesying to me with a manner of most reverential politeness, said, "When you learn, sir, that my conduct has been dictated in the interest of your safety, you will, I am sure, graciously pardon many apparent rudenesses in my manner towards you, and only see in them my zeal to serve you."

I could only bow to a speech not one syllable of which was in the least intelligible to me. She conducted me courteously to a seat, and only took her own after I was seated.

"I feel, sir," said she, "that there will be no end to our embarrassments if I do not go straight to my object and say at once that I know you. I tell you frankly, sir, that my brother did not betray your secret. The instincts of his calling — to *him* second nature — were stronger than fraternal love, and all he said to me was, 'Martha, I have found a gentleman who is going south, and who, without inconvenience, can see you safely as far as Como.' I implicitly accepted his words, and agreed to set out immediately. I suspected nothing, — I knew nothing. It was only before going down to dinner that the paragraph in the 'Courrier du Dimanche' met my eye, and as I read it, I thought I should have fainted. My first determination was not to appear at dinner. I felt that something or other in my manner would betray my knowledge of your secret. My next was to go down and behave with more than usual sharpness. You may have remarked that I was very abrupt, almost, shall I say, rude?"

I tried to enter a dissent at this, but did not succeed so happily as I meant; but she resumed:—

“At any cost, however, sir, I determined that I alone should be the depository of your confidence. Miss Herbert is to me a comparative stranger; she is, besides, very young; she would be in no wise a suitable person to intrust with such a secret, and so I said, I will pretend illness, and remain here for a day; I will make some pretext of dissatisfaction about the expense of the journey; I will affect to have had some passing difference, and he can thus leave us ere he be discovered. Not that I desire this, sir, far from it; this is the brightest episode in a long life. I never imagined that I should have enjoyed such an honor; but I have only to think of your safety, and if an old woman, unobservant and unremarking as myself, could penetrate your disguise, why not others more keen-sighted and inquisitive? Don't you agree with me?”

“There is much force in what you say, madam,” said I, with dignity, “and your words touch me profoundly.” I thought this a happy expression, for it conveyed a sort of grand condescension that seemed to hit off the occasion.

“You would never guess how I recognized you, sir,” said she.

“Never, madam.” I could have given my oath to this, if required.

“Well,” said she, with a bland smile, “it was from the resemblance to your mother!”

“Indeed!”

“Yes; you are far more like *her*, than your father, and you are scarcely so tall as he was.”

“Perhaps not, madam.”

“But you have his manner, sir, the graceful and captivating dignity that distinguished all your house; this would betray you to the eyes of all who have enjoyed the high privilege of knowing your family.”

The allusion to our house showed that we were royalties, and I laid my hand on my heart, and bowed as a prince ought, blandly but haughtily.

“Ah, sir,” said she, with a deep sigh, “your present enter-

prise fills me with apprehension. Are you not afraid, yourself, of the consequences?"

I sighed, too; and if the truth were to be told, I was very much afraid.

"But, of course, you are acting under advice, and with the counsel of those well able to guide you."

"I cannot say I am, madam; I am free to tell you that every step I am now taking is self-suggested."

"Oh, then, let me implore you to pause, sir," said she, falling on her knees before me; "let me thus entreat of you not to go further in a path so full of danger."

"Shall I confess, madam," said I, proudly, "that I do not see these dangers you speak of?"

I thought that on this hint she would talk out, and I might be able to pierce the veil of the mystery, and discover who I was; for though very like my mother, and shorter than my father, I was sorely puzzled about my parentage; but she only went off into generalities about the state of the Continent and the condition of Europe generally. I saw now that my best chance of ascertaining something about myself was to obtain from her the newspaper that first suggested her discovery of me, and I said half carelessly, "Let me see the paragraph which struck you in the 'Courrier.'"

"Ah, sir, you must excuse me, these ignoble writers have little delicacy in alluding to the misfortunes of the great; they seem to revenge the littleness of their own station on every such occasion."

"You can well imagine, madam, how time has accustomed me to such petty insults: show me the paper."

"Pray let me refuse you, sir; I would not, however blamelessly, be associated in your mind with what might offend you."

Again I protested that I was used to such attacks, that I knew all about the wretched hireling creatures who wrote them, and that instead of offending, they positively amused me, — actually made me laugh.

Thus urged, she proceeded to search for the newspaper, and only after some minutes was it that she remembered Miss Herbert had taken it away to read in the garden. She proposed to send the servant to fetch it, but this I

would not permit, pretending at last to concur in her own previously expressed contempt for the paragraph, — but secretly promising myself to go in search of it the moment I should be at liberty, — and once more she resumed the theme of my rashness, and my dangers, and all the troubles I might possibly bring upon my family, and the grief I might occasion my grandmother.

Now, as there are few men upon whom the ties of family and kindred imposed less rigid bonds, I was rather provoked at being reminded of obligations to my grandmother, and was almost driven to declare that she weighed for very little in the balance of my plans and motives. The old lady, however, rescued me from the indiscretion by a fervent entreaty that I would at least ask a certain person what he thought of my present step.

"Will you do this?" said she, with tears in her eyes. "Will you do it now?"

I promised her faithfully.

"Will you do it here, sir, at this table, and let me have the proudest memory in my life to recall the incident."

"I should like an hour or two for reflection," said I, pushed very hard by this insistence of hers, for I was sorely puzzled whom I was to write to.

"Oh," said she, still tearfully, "is it not the habit of hesitating, sir, has cost your house so dearly?"

"No," said I, "we have been always accounted prompt in action and true to our engagements."

Heaven forgive me! but in this vainglorious speech I was alluding to the motto of the Potts crest, — "*Vigilantibus omnia fausta*;" or, as some one rendered it, "Potts answers to the night-bell."

She smiled faintly at my remark. I wonder how she would have looked had she read the thought that suggested it.

"But you *will* write to him, sir?" said she, once more.

I laid my hand over what anatomists call the region of the heart, and tried to look like Charles Edward in the picture. Meanwhile my patience was beginning to fail me, and I felt that if the mystification were to last much longer I should infallibly lose my presence of mind. For

the old lady was so full of her theme that she only asked to be let talk away without interruption, with many an allusion to the dear Count and the adored Duchess, and a fervent hope that I might be ultimately reconciled to them both,— a wish which I had tact enough to perceive required the most guarded reserve on my part.

"I know I am indiscreet, sir," said she, at last; "but you must pardon one whose zeal outruns her reason."

And I bowed grandly, as I might have done in extending mercy to some captive taken in battle.

"There is but one favor more, sir, I have to beg."

"Speak it, madam. As the courtier remarked, if it be possible it is done, if impossible it *shall* be done."

"Well, sir, it is that you will not leave us till you hear from —" She hesitated as if afraid to say the name, and then added, "the Rue St. Georges. Will you give me this pledge?"

Now, though this would have been, all things considered, an arrangement very like to have lasted my life, I could not help hesitating ere I assented, not to say that our dear friend of the Rue St. Georges, whoever he was, might possibly not concur in all the delusions indispensable to my happiness. I therefore demurred, — that is, in legal acceptance, I deferred assent, — as though to say, "We'll see."

"At all events, sir, you'll accompany us to Como?"

"You have my pledge to that, madam."

"And meanwhile, sir, you agree with me that it is better I should continue to behave towards you with a cold and distant reserve."

"Unquestionably."

"Rarely meeting, seldom or never conversing."

"I should say never, madam; making, in fact, any communication you may desire to reach me through the intervention of that young person, — I forget her name."

"Miss Herbert, sir."

"Exactly; and who appears gentle and unobtrusive."

"She is a gentlewoman by birth, sir," said the old lady, tetchily.

"I have no doubt of it, madam, or she would not be found in association with *you*."

She courtesied deeply at the compliment, and I bowed as low, and, backing and bowing, I gained the door, dying with eagerness, to make my escape.

"Will you pardon me, sir, if, after all the agitation of this meeting, I may not feel equal to appear at dinner to-day?"

"You will charge that young person to give news of your health, however," said I, insinuating that I expected to see Miss Herbert.

"Certainly, sir; and if it should be your pleasure that she should dine with you, to preserve appearances —"

"You are right, madam; your remark is full of wisdom. I shall expect to meet her." And again I bowed low, and ere she recovered from another reverential courtesy I had closed the door behind me, and was half-way downstairs.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

As between the man who achieves greatness and him who has greatness thrust upon him there lies a whole world of space, so is there an immense interval between one who is the object of his own delusions and him who forms the subject of delusion to others.

My reader may have already noticed that nothing was easier for me than to lend myself to the idle current of my fancy. Most men who build "castles in Spain," as the old adage calls them, do so purely to astonish their friends. I indulged in these architectural extravagances in a very different spirit. I built my castle to live in it; from foundation to roof-tree, I planned every detail of it to suit my own taste, and all my study was to make it as habitable and comfortable as I could. Ay, and what's more, live in it I did, though very often the tenure was a brief one; sometimes while breaking my egg at breakfast, sometimes as I drew on my gloves to walk out, and yet no terror of a short lease ever deterred me from finishing the edifice in the most expensive manner. I gilded my architraves and frescoed my ceilings as though all were to endure for centuries; and laid out the gardens and disposed the parterres as though I were to walk in them in my extreme old age. This faculty of lending myself to an illusion by no means adhered to me where the deception was supplied by another; from the moment I entered one of *their* castles, I felt myself in a strange house. I continually forgot where the stairs were, what this gallery opened on, where that corridor led to. No use was it to say, "You are at home here. You are at your own fireside." I knew and I felt that I was not.

By this declaration I mean my reader to understand that, while ready for any exigency of a story devised by myself, I was perfectly miserable at playing a part written for me by a friend; nor was this feeling diminished by the thought that I really did not know the person I was believed to represent; nor had I the very vaguest clew to his antecedents or belongings.

As I set out in search of Miss Herbert, these were the reflections I revolved, occasionally asking myself, "Is the old lady at all touched in the upper story? Is there not something private-asylum-ish in these wanderings?" But still, apart from this special instance, she was a marvel of acuteness and good sense. I found Miss Herbert in a little arbor at her work; the newspaper on the bench beside her.

"So," said she, without looking up, "you have been making a long visit upstairs. You found Mrs. Keats very agreeable, or you were so yourself."

"Is there anything wrong hereabouts?" said I, touching my forehead with my finger.

"Nothing whatever."

"No fancies, no delusions about certain people?"

"None whatever."

"None of the family suspected of anything odd or eccentric?"

"Not that I have ever heard of. Why do you ask?"

"Well, it was a mere fancy, perhaps, on my part; but her manner to-day struck me as occasionally strange, — almost flighty."

"And on what subject?"

"I am scarcely at liberty to say that; in fact, I am not at all free to divulge it," said I, mysteriously, and somewhat gratified to remark that I had excited a most intense curiosity on her part to learn the subject of our interview.

"Oh, pray do not make any imprudent revelations to me," said she, pettishly; "which, apart from the indiscretion, would have the singular demerit of affording me not the slightest pleasure. I am not afflicted with the malady of curiosity."

"What a blessing to you! Now, I am the most inquisitive of mankind. I feel that if I were a clerk in a bank,

I'd spend the day prying into every one's account, and learning the exact state of his balance-sheet. If I were employed in the post-office, no terror of the law could restrain me from reading the letters. Tell me that any one has a secret in his heart, and I feel I could cut him open to get at it!"

"I don't think you are giving a flattering picture of yourself in all this," said she, peevishly.

"I am aware of that, Miss Herbert; but I am also one of those who do not trade upon qualities they have no pretension to."

She flushed a deep crimson at this, and after a moment said,—

"Has it not occurred to you, sir, that people who seldom meet except to exchange ungracious remarks would show more judgment by avoiding each other's society?"

Oh, how my heart thrilled at this pettish speech! In Hans Grüter's "Courtship," he says, "I knew she loved me, for we never met without a quarrel." "I have thought of that, too, Miss Herbert," said I, "but there are outward observances to be kept up, conventionalities to be respected."

"None of which, however, require that you should come out and sit here while I am at my work," said she, with suppressed passion.

"I came out here to search for the newspaper," said I, taking it up, and stretching myself on the grassy sward to read at leisure.

She arose at once, and, gathering all the articles of her work into a basket, walked away.

"Don't let me hunt you away, Miss Herbert," said I, indolently; "anywhere else will suit me just as well. Pray don't go." But without vouchsafing to utter a word, or even turn her head, she continued her way towards the house.

"The morning she slapped my face," says Hans, "filled the measure of my bliss, for I then saw she could not control her feelings for me." This passage recurred to me as I lay there, and I hugged myself in the thought that such a moment of delight might yet be mine. The profound German explains this sentiment well. "With women," says he, "love is like the idol worship of an Indian tribe; at the

moment their hearts are bursting with devotion, they like to cut and wound and maltreat their god. With *them*, this is the ecstasy of their passion."

I now saw that the girl was in love with me, and that she did not know it herself. I take it that the sensations of a man who suddenly discovers that the pretty girl he has been admiring is captivated by his attentions, are very like what a head clerk may feel at being sent for by the house, and informed that he is now one of the firm! This may seem a commercial formula to employ, but it will serve to show my meaning; and as I lay there on that velvet turf, what a delicious vision spread itself around me! At one moment we were rich, travelling in splendor through Europe, amassing art-treasures wherever we went and despoiling all the great galleries of their richest gems. I was the associate of all that was distinguished in literature and science, and my wife the chosen friend of queens and princesses. How unaffected we were, how unspoiled by fortune! Approachable by all, our graceful benevolence seemed to elevate its object and make of the recipient the benefactor. What a world of bliss this vile dross men call gold can scatter! "There — there, good people," said I, blandly, waving my hand, "no illuminations, no bonfires; your happy faces are the brightest of all welcomes." Then we were suddenly poor, — out of caprice, just to see how we should like it, — and living in a little cottage under Snowden, and I was writing, Heaven knows what, for the periodicals, and my wife rocking a little urchin in a cradle, whom we constantly awoke by kissing, each pretending that it was all the other's fault, till we ratified a peace in the same fashion. Then I remembered the night, never to be forgotten, when I received my appointment as something in the antipodes, and we went up to town to thank the great man who bestowed it, and he asked us to dinner, and he was, I fancied, more than polite to my wife, and I sulked about it when we got home, and she petted and caressed me, and we were better friends than ever, and I swore I would not accept the Minister's bounty, and we set off back again to our cottage in Wales, and there we were when I came to myself once more.

It is always pleasant — at least, I have ever felt it so, on

awaking from a dream or a revery — to know that one has borne himself well in some imaginary crisis of difficulty and peril. I like to think that I was in no hurry to get into the longboat. I am glad I gave poor Dick that last fifty-pound note, — my last in the world, — and I rejoice to remember that I did not run away from that grizzly bear, but sent the four-pound ball right into the very middle of his forehead. You feel in all these that the metal of your nature has been tested, and come out pure gold; at all events, I did, and was very happy thereat. It was not till after some little time that I could get myself clear out of dream-land, and back to the actual world of small debts and difficulties, and then I bethought me of the newspaper which lay unread beside me.

I began it now, resolved to examine it from end to end, till I discovered the passage that alluded to me. It was so far pleasant reading, that it was novel and original. A very able leader set forth that nothing could equal the blessings of the Pope's rule at Rome, — no people were so happy, so prosperous, or so contented, — that all the granaries were full, and all the jails empty, and the only persons of small incomes in the state were the cardinals, and that they were too heavenly-minded to care for it. After this, there came some touching anecdotes of that good man the late King of Naples. And then there was a letter from Frohsdorf, with fifteen francs enclosed to the inhabitants of a village submerged by an inundation. There were pleasant little paragraphs, too, about England, and all the money she was spending to propagate infidelity and spread the slave-trade, — the two great and especial objects of her policy, — after which came insults to France and injustice to Ireland. The general tone of the print was war with every one but some twenty or thirty old ladies and gentlemen living in exile somewhere in Bohemia. Now, none of these things touched me, and I was growing very weary of my search when I lighted upon the following: —

“ We are informed, on authority that we cannot question, that the young C. de P. is now making the tour of Germany alone and in disguise, his object being to ascertain for himself how the various relatives of his house, on the maternal side, would feel affected by any

movement in France to renew his pretensions. Strange, undignified, and ill advised as such a step must seem, there is nothing in it at all repulsive to the well-known traditions of the younger branch. Our informant himself met the P. at Mayence, and speedily recognized him, from the marked resemblance he bears to the late Duchess, his mother; he addressed him at once by his title, but was met by the cold assurance that he was mistaken, and that a casual similarity in features had already led others into the same error. The General — for our informant is an old and honored soldier of France — confessed he was astounded at the *aplomb* and self-possession displayed by so young a man; and although their conversation lasted for nearly an hour, and ranged over a wide field, the C. never for an instant exposed himself to a detection, nor offered the slightest clew to his real rank and station. Indeed, he affected to be English by birth, which his great facility in the language enabled him to do. When he quitted Mayence, it was for Central Germany."

Here was the whole mystery revealed, and I was no less a person than a royal prince, — very like my mother, but neither so tall nor robust as my distinguished father! "Oh, Potts! in all the wildest ravings of your most florid moments you never arrived at this!"

A very strange thrill went through me as I finished this paragraph. It came this wise. There is, in one of Hoffman's tales, the story of a man who, in a compact with the Fiend, acquired the power of personating whomsoever he pleased, but who, sated at last with the enjoyment of this privilege, and eager for a new sensation, determined he would try whether the part of the Devil himself might not be amusing. Apparently Mephistopheles won't stand joking, for he resented the liberty by depriving the transgressor of his identity forever, and made him become each instant whatever character occurred to the mind of him he talked to.

Though the parallel scarcely applied, the very thought of it sent an aguish thrill through me, — a terror so great and acute that it was very long before I could turn the medal round and read it on the reverse. There, indeed, was matter for vainglory! "It was but t' other day," thought I, "and Lord Keldrum and his friends fancied I was their intimate acquaintance, Jack Burgoyne; and though they soon found out the mistake, the error led to an invitation to

dinner, a delightful evening, and, alas! that I should own, a variety of consequences, some of which proved less delightful. Now, however, Fortune is in a more amiable mood; she will have it that I resemble a prince. It is a project which I neither aid nor abet; but I am not childish enough to refuse the rôle any more than I should spoil the Christmas revelries of a country-house by declining a part in a tableau or in private theatricals. I say, in the one case as in the other, 'Here is Potts! make of him what you will. Never is he happier than by affording pleasure to his friends.' To what end, I would ask, should I rob that old lady upstairs at No. 12, evidently a widow, and with not too many enjoyments to solace her old age, — why should I rob her of what she herself called the proudest episode in her life? Are not, as the moralists tell us, all our joys fleeting? Why, then, object to this one that it may only last for a few days? Let us suppose it only to endure throughout our journey, and the poor old soul will be so happy, never caring for the fatigues of the road, never fretting about the inn-keepers' charges, but delighted to know that his Royal Highness enjoys himself, and sits over his bottle of Chambertin every evening in the garden, apparently as devoid of care as though he were a bagman."

I cannot say how it may be with others, but, for myself, I have always experienced an immense sense of relief, actual repose, whenever I personated somebody else; I felt as though I had left the man Potts at home to rest and refresh himself, and took an airing as another gentleman; just as I might have spared my own paletot by putting on a friend's coat in a thunderstorm. Now I *did* wish for a little repose, I felt it would be good for me. As to the special part allotted me, I took it just as an obliging actor plays Hamlet or the Cock to convenience the manager. Mrs. Keats likes it, and, I repeat, I do not object to it.

It was evident that the old lady was not going to communicate her secret to her companion, and this was a great source of satisfaction to me. Whatever delusions I threw around Miss Herbert I intended should be lasting. The traits in which I would invest myself to *her* eyes, my personal prowess, coolness in danger, skill in all manly exer-

cises, together with a large range of general gifts and acquirements, I meant to accompany me through all time; and I am a sufficient believer in magnetism to feel assured that by imposing upon *her* I should go no small part of the road to deceiving myself, and that the first step in any gift is to suppose you are eminently suited to it, is a well-known and readily acknowledged maxim. Women grow pretty from looking in the glass; why should not men grow brave from constantly contemplating their own courage?

"Yes, Potts, be a Prince, and see how it will agree with you!"

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW I PLAY THE PRINCE.

Mrs. KEATS came down, and our dinner that day was somewhat formal. I don't think any of us felt quite at ease, and, for my own part, it was a relief to me when the old lady asked my leave to retire after her coffee. "If you should feel lonely, sir, and if Miss Herbert's company would prove agreeable —"

"Yes," said I, languidly, "that young person will find me in the garden." And therewith I gave my orders for a small table under a great weeping-ash, and the usual accompaniment of my after-dinner hours, a cool flask of Chambertin. I had time to drink more than two-thirds of my Burgundy before Miss Herbert appeared. It was not that the hour hung heavily on me, or that I was not in a mood of considerable enjoyment, but somehow I was beginning to feel chafed and impatient at her long delay. Could she possibly have remonstrated against the impropriety of being left alone with a young man? Had she heard, by any mischance, that impertinent phrase by which I designated her? Had Mrs. Keats herself resented the cool style of my permission by a counter-order? "I wish I knew what detains her!" cried I to myself, just as I heard her step on the gravel, and then saw her coming, in very leisurely fashion, up the walk.

Determined to display an indifference the equal of her own, I waited till she was almost close; and then, rising languidly, I offered her a chair with a superb air of Brummelism, while I listlessly said, "Won't you take a seat?"

It was growing duskish, but I fancied I saw a smile on her lip as she sat down.

"May I offer you a glass of wine or a cigar?" said I, carelessly.

"Neither, thank you," said she, with gravity.

"Almost all women of fashion smoke nowadays," I resumed. "The Empress of the French smokes this sort of thing here; and the Queen of Bavaria smokes and chews."

She seemed rebuked at this, and said nothing.

"As for myself," said I, "I am nothing without tobacco, — positively nothing. I remember one night, — it was the fourth sitting of the Congress at Paris, that Sardinian fellow, you know his name, came to me and said, —

"'There's that confounded question of the Danubian Provinces coming on to-morrow, and Gortschakoff is the only one who knows anything about it. Where are we to get at anything like information?'

"'When do you want it, Count?' said I.

"'To-morrow, by eleven at latest. There must be, at least, a couple of hours to study it before the Congress meets.'

"'Tell them to bring in ten candles, fifty cigars, and two quires of foolscap,' said I, 'and let no one pass this door till I ring.' At ten minutes to eleven next morning he had in his hands that memoir which Lord C. said embodied the prophetic wisdom of Edmund Burke with the practical statesmanship of the great Commoner. Perhaps you have read it?"

"No, sir."

"Your tastes do not probably incline to affairs of state. If so, only suggest what you'd like to talk on. I am indifferently skilled in most subjects. Are you for the poets? I am ready, from Dante to the Biglow Papers. Shall it be arts? I know the whole thing from Memmling and his long-nosed saints, to Leech and the Punchists. Make it antiquities, agriculture, trade, dress, the drama, conchology, or cock-fighting, — I'm your man; so go in; and don't be afraid that you'll disconcert me."

"I assure you, sir, that my fears would attach far more naturally to my own insufficiency."

"Well," said I, after a pause, "there's something in that. Macaulay used to be afraid of me. Whenever Mrs. Montagu Stanhope asked him to one of her Wednesday dinners, he always declined if I was to be there. You don't seem surprised at that?"

"No, sir," said she, in the same quiet, grave fashion.

"What's the reason, young lady," said I, somewhat sternly, "that you persist in saying 'sir' on every occasion that you address me? The ease of that intercourse that should subsist between us is marred by this Americanism. The pleasant interchange of thought loses the charming feature of equality. How is this?"

"I am not at liberty to say, sir."

"You are not at liberty to say, young lady?" said I, severely. "You tell me distinctly that your manner towards me is based upon a something which you must not reveal?"

"I am sure, sir, you have too much generosity to press me on a subject of which I cannot, or ought not to speak."

That fatal Burgundy had got into my brains, while the princely delusion was uppermost; and if I had been submitted to the thumbscrew now, I would have died one of the Orleans family.

"Mademoiselle," said I, grandly, "I have been fortunately, or unfortunately, brought up in a class that never tolerates contradiction. When we ask, we feel that we order."

"Oh, sir, if you but knew the difficulty I am in —"

"Take courage, my dear creature," said I, blending condescension with something warmer. "You will at least be reposing your confidence where it will be worthily bestowed."

"But I have promised — not exactly promised; but Mrs. Keats enjoined me imperatively not to betray what she revealed to me."

"Gracious Powers!" cried I, "she has not surely communicated my secret, — she has not told you who I am?"

"No, sir, I assure you most solemnly that she has not; but being annoyed by what she remarked as the freedom of my manner towards you at dinner, the readiness with which I replied to your remarks, and what she deemed the want of deference I displayed for them, she took me to task this evening, and, without intending it, even before she knew, dropped certain expressions which showed me that you were one of the very highest in rank, though it was your pleasure to travel for the moment in this obscurity and disguise.

She quickly perceived the indiscretion she had committed, and said, 'Now, Miss Herbert, that an accident has put you in possession of certain circumstances, which I had neither the will nor the right to reveal, will you do me the inestimable favor to employ this knowledge in such a way as may not compromise me?' I told her, of course, that I would; and having remarked how she occasionally — inadvertently, perhaps — used 'sir' in addressing you, I deemed the imitation a safe one, while it as constantly acted as a sort of monitor over myself to repress any relapse into familiarity."

"I am very sorry for all this," said I, taking her hand in mine, and employing my most insinuating of manners towards her. "As it is more than doubtful that I shall ever resume the station that once pertained to me; as, in fact, it may be my fortune to occupy for the rest of life an humble and lowly condition, my ambition would have been to draw towards me in that modest station such sympathies and affections as might attach to one so circumstanced. My plan was to assume an obscure name, seek out some unfrequented spot, and there, with the love of one — one only — solve the great problem, whether happiness is not as much the denizen of the thatched cottage as of the gilded palace. The first requirement of my scheme was that my secret should be in my own keeping. One can steel his own heart against vain regrets and longings; but one cannot secure himself against the influence of those sympathies which come from without, the unwise promptings of zealous followers, the hopes and wishes of those who read your submission as mere apathy."

I paused and sighed; she sighed, too, and there was a silence between us.

"Must she not feel very happy and very proud," thought I, "to be sitting there on the same bench with a prince, her hand in his, and he pouring out all his confidence in her ear? I cannot fancy a situation more full of interest."

"After all, sir," said she, calmly, "remember that Mrs. Keats alone knows your secret. I have not the vaguest suspicion of it."

"And yet," said I, tenderly, "it is to *you* I would confide

it; it is in *your* keeping I would wish to leave it; it is from *you* I would ask counsel as to my future."

"Surely, sir, it is not to such inexperience as mine you would address yourself in a difficulty?"

"The plan I would carry out demands none of that crafty argument called 'knowing the world.' All that acquaintance with the by-play of life, its conventionalities and exactions, would be sadly out of place in an Alpine village, or a Tyrolese Dorf, where I mean to pitch my tent. Do you not think that your interest might be persuaded to track me so far?"

"Oh, sir, I shall never cease to follow your steps with the deepest anxiety."

"Would it not be possible for me to secure a lease of that sympathy?"

"Can you tell me what o'clock it is, sir?" said she, very gravely.

"Yes," said I, rather put out by so sudden a diversion; "it is a few minutes after nine."

"Pray excuse my leaving you, sir, but Mrs. Keats takes her tea at nine, and will expect me."

And, with a very respectful courtesy, she withdrew, before I could recover my astonishment at this abrupt departure.

"I trust that my Royal Highness said nothing indiscreet," muttered I to myself; "though, upon my life, this hasty exit would seem to imply it."

CHAPTER XXII.

INCIDENTS OF THE SECOND DAY'S JOURNEY.

WE continued our journey the next morning, but it was not without considerable difficulty that I succeeded in maintaining my former place in the cabriolet. That stupid old woman fancied that princes were born to be bored, and suggested accordingly that I should travel inside with her, leaving the macaw and the toy terriers to keep company with Miss Herbert. It was only by insisting on an outside place as a measure of health that I at last prevailed, telling her that Dr. Corvisart was peremptory on two points regarding me. "Let him," said he, "have abundance of fresh air, and never be without some young companion."

And so we were again in our little leathern tent, high up in the fresh breezy atmosphere, above dusty roads, and with a glorious view over that lovely country that forms the approach to the Black Forest. The road was hilly, and the carriage-way a heavy one; but we had six horses, who trotted along briskly, shaking their merry bells, and flourishing their scarlet tassels, while the postilions cracked their whips or broke out into occasional bugle performances, principally intended to announce to the passing peasants that we were very great folk, and well able to pay for all the noise we required.

I was not ashamed to confess my enjoyment in thus whirling along at some ten miles the hour, remembering how that great sage Dr. Johnson had confessed to a like pleasure, and, animated by the inspiring air and the lovely landscape, could not help asking Miss Herbert if she did not feel it "very jolly."

She assented with a sort of constrained courtesy that by no means responded to the warmth of my own sensations, and I felt vexed and chafed accordingly.

"Perhaps you prefer travelling inside?" said I, with some pique.

"No, sir."

"Perhaps you dislike travelling altogether?"

"No, sir."

"Perhaps —" But I checked myself, and with a somewhat stiff air, I said, "Would you like a book?"

"If it would not be rude to read, sir, while you —"

"Oh, not at all, never mind me, I have more than enough to think of. Here are some things by Dumas, and Paul Féval, and some guide-book trash." And with that I handed her several volumes, and sank back into my corner in sulky isolation.

Here was a change! Ten minutes ago all Nature smiled on me; from the lark in the high heavens to the chirping grasshopper in the tall maize-field, it was one song of joy and gladness. The very clouds as they swept past threw new and varied light over the scene, as though to show fresh effects of beauty on the landscape, — the streams went by in circling eddies, like smiles upon a lovely face, — and now all was sad and crape-covered! "What has wrought this dreary change?" thought I; "is it possible that the cold looks of a young woman, good-looking, I grant, but no regular downright beauty after all, can have altered the aspect of the whole world to you? Are you so poor a creature in yourself, Potts, so beggared in your own resources, so barren in all the appliances of thought and reflection, that if your companion, whoever she or he may be, sulk, you must needs reflect the humor? Are you nothing but the mirror that displays what is placed before it?"

I set myself deliberately to scan the profile beside me; her black veil, drawn down on the side furthest from me, formed a sort of background, which displayed her pale features more distinctly. All about the brow and orbit was beautifully regular, but the mouth was, I fancied, severe; there was a slight retraction of the upper lip that seemed to imply over-firminess, and then the chin was deeply indented, — "a sign," Lavater says, "of those who have a will of their own." "Potts," thought I, "she'd rule you, —

that's a nature would speedily master yours. I don't think there's any softness either, any of that yielding gentleness there, that makes the poetry of womanhood; besides, I suspect she's worldly, — those sharply cut nostrils are very worldly! She is, in fact," — and here I unconsciously uttered my thoughts aloud, — "she is, in fact, one to say, 'Potts, how much have you got a-year? Let us have it in figures.'"

"So you are still ruminating over the life of that interesting creature," said she, laying down her book to laugh; "and shall I confess, I lay awake half the night, inventing incidents and imagining situations for him."

"For whom?" said I, innocently.

"For Potts, of course. I cannot get him out of my head such as I first fancied he might be, and I see now, by your unconscious allusion to him, that he has his place in your imagination also."

"You mistake, Miss Herbert, — at least you very much misapprehend my conception of that character. The Potts family has a high historic tradition. Sir Constantine Potts was cup-bearer to Henry II., and I really see no reason why ridicule should attach to one who may be, most probably, his descendant."

"I'm very sorry, sir, if I should have dared to differ with you; but when I heard the name first, and in connection with two such names as Algernon Sydney, and when I thought by what strange accident did they ever meet in the one person —"

"You are very young, Miss Herbert, and therefore not removed from the category of the teachable," said I, with a grand didactic look. "Let me guard you, therefore, against the levity of chance inferences. What would you say if a person named Potts were to make the offer of his hand? I mean, if he were a man in all respects acceptable, a gentleman captivating in manner and address, agreeable in person, graceful and accomplished, — what would you reply to his advances?"

"Really, sir, I am shocked to think of the humble opinion I may be conveying of my sense and judgment, but I'm afraid I should tell him it is impossible I could ever permit myself to be called Mrs. Potts."

"But, in Heaven's name, why? — I ask you why?"

"Oh, sir! don't be angry with me; it surely does not deserve such a penalty; at the worst, it is a mere caprice on my part."

"I am not angry, young lady, I am simply provoked; I am annoyed to think that a prejudice so unworthy of you should exercise such a control over your judgment."

"I am quite ashamed, sir, to have been the occasion of so much displeasure to you. I hope and trust you will ascribe it to my ignorance of life and the world."

"If you are dissatisfied with yourself, Miss Herbert, I have no more to say," said I, taking up a book, and pretending to read, while I felt such a disgust with myself that if I had n't been strapped up with a leather apron up to my chin, I think I should have thrown myself headlong down and let the wheel pass over me. "What is it, Potts, that is corrupting and destroying the naturally fine and noble nature you are certainly endowed with? Is it this confounded elevation to princely rank? If you were not a Royal Highness, would you have dared to utter such cruelties as these? Would you, in your most savage of moods, have presumed to make that pale cheek paler, and forced a tear-drop into that liquid eye? I always used to think that the greatest effort of a man was to keep him on a level with those born above him. I now find it is far harder to stoop than to stand on tiptoe. Such a pain in the back comes of always bending, and it is so difficult to do it gracefully!"

I was positively dying to be what the French call *bon prince*, and yet I did n't know how to set about it. I could not take off one of my decorations, — a cross or a ribbon, — for I had none; nor give it, because she, being a woman, could n't wear it. I could n't make her one of the court ladies, for there was no court; and yet it was clear something should be done, if one only knew what it was. "I suppose now," said I to myself, "a real R. H. would see his way here at once; the right thing to do, the exact expression to use would occur as naturally to his mind as all this embarrassment presents itself to mine. 'Whenever your head cannot guide you,' says a Spanish proverb, 'ask your heart;' and so I did, and my heart spoke thus: 'Tell her,

Potts, who you are, and what; say to her, "Listen, young lady, to the words of truth from one who could tell you far more glibly, far more freely, and far more willingly, a whole bushel of lies. It will sit light on his heart that he deceive the old lady inside, but *you* he cannot, will not deceive. Do not deem the sacrifice a light one; it cost St. George far less to go out dragon-hunting than it costs me to slay this small monster who ever prompts me to feats of fancy." "

"I am very sorry to be troublesome, sir, but as we change horses here, I will ask you to assist me to alight; the weather looks very threatening, and some drops of rain have already fallen."

These words roused me from my revery to action, and I got down, not very dexterously either, for I slipped, and made the postilion laugh, and then I helped her, who accomplished the descent so neatly, so gracefully, showing the least portion of such an ankle, and accidentally giving me such a squeeze of the hand! The next moment she was lost to me, the clanking steps were drawn up, the harsh door banged to, and I was alone, — all alone in the world.

Like a sulky eagle, sick of the world, I climbed up to my eyry. I no longer wished for sunshine or scenery; nay, I was glad to see the postboys put on their overcoats and prepare for a regular down-pour. I liked to think there are some worse off than even Potts. In half an hour *they* will be drenched to the skin, and I'll not feel a drop of it!

The little glass slide at my back was now withdrawn, and Miss Herbert's pale, sweet face appeared at it. She was saying that Mrs. Keats urgently entreated I would come inside, that she was so uneasy at my being exposed to such a storm.

I refused, and was about to enter into an account of my ascent of Mont Blanc, when the slide was closed and my listener lost to me.

"Is it possible, Potts," said I, "that she has detected this turn of yours for the imaginative line, and that she will not encourage it, even tacitly? Has she said, 'There is a young man of genius, gifted marvellously with the richest qualities, and yet such is the exuberance of his fancy that he is positively its slave. Not content to let him walk the

earth like other men, she attaches wings to him and carries him off into the upper air. I will endeavor, however hard the task, to clip his feathers and bring him back to the common haunts of men'? Try it, fair enchantress, try it!"

The rain was now coming down in torrents, and with such swooping gusts of wind that I was forced to fasten the leather curtain in front of me, and sit in utter darkness, denied even the passing pleasure of seeing the drenched postboys bobbing up and down on the wet saddles. I grew moody and sad. Every Blue Devil of my acquaintance came to pay his visit to me, and brought a few more of his private friends. I bethought me that I was hourly travelling away further and further from my home; that all this long road must surely be retraced one day or other, though not in a carriage and post, but probably in a one-horse cart, with a mounted gendarme on either side of it, and a string to my two wrists in their bridle hands. I thought of that vulgar herd of mankind so ready to weep over a romance, and yet send the man who acts one to a penal settlement. I thought how I should be described as the artful knave, the accomplished swindler. As if I was the first man who ever took an exaggerated estimate of his own merits! Go into the House of Commons, visit the National Gallery, dine at a bar or a military mess; frequent, in one word, any of the haunts of men, and with what *pièces pour servir à l'histoire* of self-deception will you come back loaded!

The sliding window at my back was again drawn aside, and I heard Miss Herbert's voice, —

"If I am not giving you too much trouble, sir, would you kindly see if I have not dropped a bracelet — a small jet bracelet — in the *coupé*?"

"I'm in the dark here, but I'll do my best to find it."

"We are very nearly so, too," said she; "and Mrs. Keats is fast asleep, quite unmindful of the thunder."

With some struggling I managed to get down on my knees, and was soon engaged in a very vigorous search. To aid me, I lighted a lucifer match, and by its flickering glare I saw right in front of me that beautiful pale face, enclosed as it were in a frame by the little window. She blushed at the fixedness of my gaze, for I utterly forgot myself in my

admiration, and stared as though at a picture. My match went out, and I lit another. Alas! there she was still, and I could not force myself to turn away, but gazed on in rapture.

"I'm sorry to give you this trouble, sir," said she, in some confusion. "Pray never mind it. It will doubtless be found this evening when we arrive."

Another lucifer, and now I pretended to be in most eager pursuit; but somehow my eyes would look up and rest upon her sweet countenance.

"A diamond bracelet, you said?" muttered I, not knowing what I was saying.

"No, sir, mere jet, and of no value whatever, save to myself. I am really distressed at all the inconvenience I have occasioned you. I entreat you to think no more of it."

My match was out, and I had not another. "Was ever a man robbed of such ecstasy for a mere pennyworth of stick and a little sulphur? O Fortune! is not this downright cruelty?"

As I mumbled my complaints, I searched away with an honest zeal, patting the cushions all over, and poking away into most inscrutable pockets and recesses, while she, in a most beseeching tone, apologized for her request and besought me to forget it.

"Found! found!" cried I, in true delight, as I chanced upon the treasure at my feet.

"Oh, sir, you have made me *so* happy, and I am so much obliged, and so grateful to you!"

"Not another word, I beseech you," whispered I; "you are actually turning my head with ecstasy. Give me your hand, let me clasp it on your arm, and I am repaid."

"Will you kindly pass it to me, sir, through the window?" said she, timidly.

"Ah!" cried I, in anguish, "your gratitude has been very fleeting."

She muttered something I could not catch, but I heard the rustle of her sleeve against the window-frame, and dark as it was, pitch dark, I knew her hand was close to me. Opening the bracelet, I passed it round her wrist as reverently

as though it were the arm of a Queen of Spain, one touch of whom is high treason. I trembled so, that it was some seconds before I could make the clasp meet. This done, I felt she was withdrawing her hand, when, with something like that headlong impulse by which men set their lives on one chance, I seized the fingers in my grasp, and implanted two rapturous kisses on them. She snatched her hand hastily away, closed the window with a sharp bang, and I was alone once more in my darkness, but in such a flutter of blissful delight that even the last reproving gesture could scarcely pain me. It mattered little to me that day that the lightning felled a great pine and threw it across the road, that the torrents were so swollen that we only could pass them with crowds of peasants around the carriage with ropes and poles to secure it, that four oxen were harnessed in front of our leaders to enable us to meet the hurricane, or that the post-boys were paid treble their usual fare for all their perils to life and limb. I cared for none of these, Enough for me that, on this day, I can say with Schiller,

“Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück,
Ich habe gelebt und geliebt!”

CHAPTER XXIII.

JEALOUSY UNSUPPORTED BY COURAGE.

WE arrived at a small inn on the borders of the Titi-see at nightfall; and though the rain continued to come down unceasingly, and huge masses of cloud hung half-way down the mountain, I could see that the spot was highly picturesque and romantic. Before I could descend from my lofty eminence, so strapped and buttoned and buckled up was I, the ladies had time to get out and reach their rooms. When I asked to be shown mine, the landlord, in a very free-and-easy tone, told me that there was nothing for me but a double-bedded room, which I must share with another traveller. I scouted this proposition at once with a degree of force, and, indeed, of violence, that I fancied must prove irresistible; but the stupid German, armed with native impassiveness, simply said, "Take it or leave it, it's nothing to me," and left me to look after his business. I stormed and fumed. I asked the chambermaid if she knew who I was, and sent for the Hausknecht to tell him that all Europe should ring with this indignity. I more than hinted that the landlord had sealed his own doom, and that his miserable cabaret had seen its last days of prosperity.

I asked next, where was the Jew pedler? I felt certain he was a fellow with pencil-cases and pipe-heads, who owned the other half of the territory. Could he not be bought up? He would surely sleep in the cow-house, if it were too wet to go up a tree!

François came to inform me that he was out fishing; that he fished all day, and only came home after dark; his man had told him so much.

"His man? Why, has he a servant?" asked I.

"He's not exactly like a servant, sir; but a sort of peasant with a green jacket and a tall hat and leather gaiters, like a Tyrolese."

"Strolling actors, I'll be sworn," muttered I; "fellows taking a week's holiday on their way to a new engagement. How long have they been here?"

"Came on Monday last in the diligence, and are to remain till the twentieth; two florins a day they give for everything."

"What nation are they?"

"Germans, sir, regular Germans; never a pipe out of their mouths, master and man. I learned all this from his servant, for they have put up a bed for me in his room."

A sudden thought now struck me: "Why should not François give up his bed to this stranger, and occupy the one in my room?" This arrangement would suit *me* better, and it ought to be all the same to Hamlet or Goetz, or whatever he was. "Just lounge about the door, François," said I, "till he comes back; and when you see him, open the thing to him, civilly, of course; and if a crown piece, or even two, will help the negotiation, slip it slyly into his hand. You understand?"

François winked like a man who had corrupted custom-house officers in his time, and even bribed bigger functionaries at a pinch.

"If he's in trade, you know, François, just hint that if he sends in his pack in the course of the evening, the ladies might possibly take a fancy to something."

Another wink.

"And throw out—vaguely, of course, very vaguely—that we are swells, but in strict *incog*."

A great scoundrel was François; he was a Swiss, and could cheat any one, and, like a regular rogue, never happier than when you gave him a mission of deceit or duplicity. In a word, when I gave him his instructions, I regarded the negotiation as though it were completed, and now addressed myself to the task of looking after our supper, which, with national obstinacy, the landlord declared could not be ready before nine o'clock. As usual, Mrs. Keats had gone to bed immediately on arriving; but

when sending me a "good-night" by her maid, she added, "that whenever supper was served, Miss Herbert would come down."

We had no sitting-room save the common room of the inn, a long, low-ceilinged, dreary chamber, with a huge green-tile stove in one corner, and down the centre a great oak table, which might have served about forty guests. At one end of this three covers were laid for us, the napkins enclosed in bone circlelets, and the salt in great leaden receptacles, like big ink-bottles; a very ancient brass lamp giving its dim radiance over all. It was wearisome to sit down on the straight-backed wooden chairs, and not less irksome to walk on the gritty, sanded floor, and so I lounged in one of the windows, and watched the rain. As I looked, I saw the figure of a man with a fishing-basket and rod on his shoulder approaching the house. I guessed at once it was our stranger, and, opening the window a few inches, I listened to hear the dialogue between him and François. The window was enclosed in the same porch as the door, so that I could hear a good deal of what passed. François accosted him familiarly, questioned him as to his sport, and the size of the fish he had taken. I could not hear the reply, but I remarked that the stranger emptied his basket, and was despatching the contents in different directions: some were for the curé, and some for the postmaster, some for the brigadier of the gendarmerie, and one large trout for the miller's daughter.

"A good-looking wench, I'll be sworn," said François, as he heard the message delivered.

Again the stranger said something, and I thought, from the tone, angrily, and François responded; and then I saw them walk apart for a few seconds, during which François seemed to have all the talk to himself, — a good omen, as it appeared to me, of success, and a sure warranty that the treaty was signed. François, however, did not come to report progress, and so I closed the window and sat down.

"So you have got company to-night, Master Ludwig," said the stranger, as he entered, followed by the host, who speedily seemed to whisper that one of the arrivals was then before him. The stranger bowed stiffly but courteously to

me, which I returned not less haughtily; and I now saw that he was a man about thirty-five, but much freckled, with a light-brown beard and moustache. On the whole, a good-looking fellow, with a very upright carriage, and something of a cavalry soldier in the swing of his gait.

"Would you like it at once, Herr Graf?" said the host, obsequiously.

"Oh, he's a count, is he?" said I, with a sneer to myself. "These countships go a short way with *me*."

"You had better consult your other guests; I am ready when *they* are," said the stranger.

Now, though the speech was polite and even considerate, I lost sight of the courtesy in thinking that it implied we were about to sup in common, and that the third cover was meant for him.

"I say, landlord," said I, "you don't intend to tell me that you have no private sitting-room, but that ladies of condition must needs come down and sup here with" — I was going to say, "Heaven knows who;" but I halted, and said — "with the general company."

"That, or nothing!" was the sturdy response. "The guests in this house eat here, or don't eat at all; eh, Herr Graf?"

"Well, so far as my experience goes, I can corroborate you," said the stranger, laughing; "though, you may remember, I have often counselled you to make some change."

"That you have; but I don't want to be better than my father and my grandfather; and the Archduke Charles stopped here in *their* time, and never quarrelled with his treatment."

I told the landlord to apprise the young lady whenever supper was ready, and I walked to a distant part of the room and sat down.

In about two minutes after, Miss Herbert appeared, and the supper was served at once. I had not met her since the incident of the bracelet, and I was shocked to see how cold she was in her manner, and how resolute in repelling the most harmless familiarity towards her.

I wanted to explain to her that it was through no fault of mine we were to have the company of that odious stranger, that it was one of the disagreeables of these wayside hostels,

and to be borne with patience, and that though he was a stage-player, or a sergeant of dragoons, he was reasonably well-bred and quiet. I did contrive to mumble out some of this explanation; but, instead of attending to it, I saw her eyes following the stranger, who had just draped a large riding-cloak over a clothes-horse behind her chair, to serve as a screen. Thanks are all very well, but I'm by no means certain that gratitude requires such a sweet glance as that, not to mention that I saw the expression in her eyes for the first time.

I thought the soup would choke me. I almost hoped it might. Othello was a mild case of jealousy compared to me, and I felt that strangling would not half glut my vengeance. And how they talked!—he complimenting her on her accent, and she telling him how her first governess was a Hanoverian from Celle, where they are all such purists. There was nothing they did not discuss in those detestable gutturals, and as glibly as if it had been a language meet for human lips. I could not eat a mouthful, but I drank and watched them. The fellow was not long in betraying himself: he was soon deep in the drama. He knew every play of Schiller by heart, and quoted the Wallenstein, the Robbers, Don Carlos, and Maria Stuart at will; so, too, was he familiar with Goethe and Lessing. He had all the swinging intonation of the boards, and declaimed so very professionally that, as he concluded a passage, I cried out, without knowing it, —

“Take that for your benefit, — it's the best you have given yet.”

Oh, Lord, how they laughed! She covered up her face and smothered it; but he lay back, and, holding the table with both hands, he positively shouted and screamed aloud. I would have given ten years of life for the courage to have thrown my glass of wine in his face; but it was no use, Nature had been a niggard to me in that quarter, and I had to sit and hear it, — exactly so, sit and hear it, — while they made twenty attempts to recover their gravity and behave like ladies and gentlemen, and when, no sooner would they look towards me, than off they were again as bad as before.

I revolved a dozen cutting sarcasms, all beginning with, "Whenever I feel assured that you have sufficiently regained the customary calm of good society;" but the dessert was served ere I could complete the sentence, and now they were deep in the lyric poets, Uhland, and Körner, and Freiligrath, and the rest of them. As I listened to their enthusiasm, I wondered why people never went into raptures over a cold in the head. But it was not to end here: there was an old harpsichord in the room, and this he opened and set to work on in that fearful two-handed fashion your German alone understands. The poor old crippled instrument shook on its three legs, while the fourth fell clean off, and the loose wires jangled and jarred like knives in a tray; but he only sang the louder, and her ecstasies grew all the greater too.

Heaven reward you, dear old Mrs. Keats, when you sent word down that you could n't sleep a wink, and begging them to "send that noisy band something and let them go away;" and then Miss Herbert wished him a sweet good-night, and he accompanied her to the door, and then there was more good-night, and I believe I had a short fit; but when I came to myself, he was sitting smoking his cigar opposite me.

"You are no relative, no connection of the young lady who has just left the room?" said he to me with a grave manner, so significant of something under it that I replied hastily, "None, — none whatever."

"Was that servant who spoke to me in the porch, as I came in this evening, yours?"

"Yes." This I said more boldly, as I suspected he was coming to the question François had opened.

"He mentioned to me," said he, slowly, and puffing his cigar at easy intervals, "that you desire your servant should sleep in the same room with you. I am always happy to meet the wishes of courteous fellow-travellers, and so I have ordered my servant to give you *his* bed; he will sleep upstairs in what was intended for *you*. Good-night." And with an insolent nod he lounged out of the room and left me.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MY CANDOR AS AN AUTOBIOGRAPHER.

My reader is sufficiently acquainted with me by this time to know that there is one quality in me on which he can always count with safety, — my candor! There may be braver men and more ingenious men; there may be, I will not dispute it, persons more gifted with oratorical powers, better linguists, better mathematicians, and with higher acquirements in art; but I take my stand upon candor, and say, there never lived the man, ancient or modern, who presented a more open and undisguised section of himself than I have done, am doing, and hope to do to the end. And what, I would ask you, is the reason why we have hitherto made so little progress in that greatest of all sciences, — the knowledge of human nature? Is it not because we are always engaged in speculating on what goes on in the hearts of others, guessing, as it were, what people are doing next door, instead of honestly recording what takes place in their own house?

You think this same candor is a small quality. Well, show me one thoroughly honest autobiography. Of all the men who have written their own memoirs, it is fair to presume that some may have lacked personal courage, some been deficient in truthfulness, some forgetful of early friendships, and so on. Yet where will you find me one, I only ask one, who declares, "I was a coward, I never could speak truth, I was by nature ungrateful"?

Now, it would be exactly through such confessions as these our knowledge of humanity would be advanced. The ship that makes her voyage without the loss of a spar or a rope, teaches little; but there is a whole world of information in the log of the vessel with a great hole in her, all her

masts carried away, the captain invariably drunk, and the crew mutinous; then we hear of energy and daring and ready-wittedness, marvellous resource, and indomitable perseverance; then we come to estimate a variety of qualities that are only evoked by danger. Just as some gallant skipper might say, "I saw that we couldn't weather the point, and so I dropped anchor in thirty fathoms, and determined to trust all to my cables;" or, "I perceived that we were settling down, so I crowded all sail on, resolved to beach her." In the same spirit I would like to read in some personal memoir, "Knowing that I could not rely on my courage; feeling that if pressed hard, I should certainly have told a lie—" Oh, if we only could get honesty like this! If some great statesman, some grand foreground figure of his age would sit down to give his trials as they really occurred, we should learn more of life from one such volume than we glean from all the mock memoirs we have been reading for centuries!

It is the special pleading of these records that makes them so valueless; the writer always is bent on making out his case. It is the eternal representation of that spectacle said to be so pleasing to the gods,—the good man struggling with adversity. But what we want to see is the weak man, the frail man, the man who has to fight adversity with an old rusty musket and a flint lock, instead of an Enfield rifle, loading at the breech!

I'd not give a rush to see Blondin cross the Falls of Niagara on a tight-rope; but I'd cross the Atlantic to see, say, the Lord Mayor or the Master of the Rolls try it.

Now, much-respected reader, do not for a moment suppose that I have, even in my most vainglorious raptures, ever imagined that I was here in these records supplying the void I have pointed out. Remember that I have expressly told you such confessions, to be valuable, ought to come from a great man. Painful as the avowal is, I am not a great man! Elements of greatness I have in me, it is true; but there are wants, deficiencies, small little details, many of them,—rivets and bolts, as it were,—without which the machinery can't work; and I know this, and I feel it.

This digression has all grown out of my unwillingness to

mention what mention I must,—that I passed my night at the little inn on the table where we supped. I had not courage to assert the right to my bed in the Count's room; and so I wrapped myself in my cloak, and with my carpet-bag for a pillow, tried to sleep. It was no use; the most elastic spring-mattress and a down cushion would have failed that night to lull me! I was outraged beyond endurance: *she* had slighted, *he* had insulted me! Such a provocation as he gave me could have but one expiation. He could not, by any pretext, refuse me satisfaction. But was I as ready to ask it? Was it so very certain that I would insist upon this reparation? He was certain to wound, he might kill me! I believe I cried over that thought. To be cut off in the bud of one's youth, in the very spring-time of one's enjoyment, — I could not say of one's utility, — to go down unnoticed to the grave, never appreciated, never understood, with vulgar and mistaken judgments upon one's character and motives! I thought my heart would burst with the affliction of such a picture, and I said, "No, Potts, live; and reply to such would-be slanderers by the exercise of the qualities of your great nature." Numberless beautiful little episodes came thronging to my memory of good men, men whose personal gallantry had won them a world-wide renown, refusing to fight a duel. "We are to storm the citadel to-morrow, Colonel," said one; "let us see which of us will be first up the breach." How I loved that fellow for his speech; and I tortured my mind how, as there was no citadel to be carried by assault, I could apply its wisdom to my own case. What if I were to say, "Count, the world is before us, — a world full of trials and troubles. With the common fortune of humanity, we are certain each of us to have our share. What if we meet on this spot, say ten years hence, and see who has best acquitted himself in the conflict?" I wonder what he would say. The Germans are a strange, imaginative, dreamy sort of folk. Is it not likely that he would be struck by a notion so undeniably original? Is it not probable that he would seize my hand with rapture, and say, "Ja! I agree"? Still, it is possible that he might not; he might be one of those vulgar matter-of-fact creatures who

will regard nothing through the tinted glass of fancy; he might ridicule the project, and tell it at breakfast as a joke. I felt almost smothered as this notion crossed me.

I next bethought me of the privileges of my rank. Could I, as an R. H., accept the vulgar hazards of a personal encounter? Would not such conduct be derogatory in one to whom great destinies might one day be committed? Not that I lent myself, be it remarked, to the delusion of being a prince; but that I felt, if the line of conduct would be objectionable to men in my rank and condition, it inevitably followed that it must be bad. What I could neither do as the descendant of St. Louis, or the son of Peter Potts, must needs be wrong. These were the grievous meditations of that long, long night; and though I arose from the hard table, weary and with aching bones, I blessed the pinkish-gray light that ushered in the day. I had scarcely completed a very rapid toilet, when François came with a message from Mrs. Keats, "hoping I had rested well, and begging to know at what hour it was my pleasure to continue the journey." There was an evident astonishment in the fellow's face at the embassy with which he was charged; and though he delivered the message with reasonable propriety, there was a certain something in his look that said, "What delusion is this you have thrown around the old lady?"

"Say that I am ready, François; that I am even impatient to be off, and the sooner we start the better."

This I uttered with all my heart; for I was eager to get away before the odious German should be stirring, and could not subdue my anxiety to avoid meeting him again. There was every reason to expect that we should get off unnoticed, and I hastened out myself to order the horses and stimulate the postilions to greater activity. This was no labor of love, I promise you! The sluggardly inertness of that people passes all belief; entreaties, objurgations, curses, even bribes could not move them. They never admitted such a possibility as haste, and stumped about in their wooden shoes or iron-bound boots, searching for articles of horse-gear under bundles of hay or stacks of firewood, as though it was the very first time in their lives that

post-horses had ever been required in that locality. "Make a great people out of such materials as these!" muttered I; "what rubbish to imagine it! How, with such intolerable apathy, are they to be moved? Where everything proceeds at the same regulated slowness, how can justice ever overtake crime? When can truth come up with falsehood? Whichever starts first here, must inevitably win." To urge the creatures on by example, I assisted with my own hands to put on the harness; not, I will own, with much advantage to speed, for I put the collar on upside down, and, in revenge for the indignity, the beast planted one of his feet upon me, and almost drove the cock of his shoe through my instep. Almost mad with pain and passion, I limped away into the garden, and sat down in a damp summer-house. A sleepless night, a lazy ostler, and a bruised foot are, after all, not stunning calamities; but there are moments when our jarred nerves jangle at the slightest touch, and even the most trivial inconveniences grow to the size of afflictions.

"We began to fear you were lost, sir," said François, breaking in upon my gloomy revery I cannot say how long after. "The horses have been at the door this half-hour, and all the house searching after you."

I did not deign a reply, but followed him, as he led me by a short path to the house. Mrs. Keats and Miss Herbert had taken their places inside the carriage, and, to my ineffable disgust, there was the German chatting with them at the door, and actually presenting a bouquet the landlord had just culled for her. Unable to confront the fellow with that contemptuous indifference which I knew with a little time and preparation I could summon to my aid, I scaled up to my leathern attic and let down the blinds.

"Do you mean," said I, through a small slit in my curtain, — "do you mean to sit smoking there all day? Will you never drive on?" And now, with a crash of bolts and a jarring of cordage, like what announced the launch of a small ship, the heavy conveniency lurched, surged, and, after two or three convulsive bounds, lumbered along, and we started on our day's journey. As we bumped along, I remembered that I had never wished the ladies a "good-

morning," nor addressed them in any way; so completely had my selfish preoccupation immersed me in my own annoyances, that I actually forgot the commonest attentions of every-day life. I was pained by this rudeness on my part, and waited with impatience for our first change of horses to repair my omission. Before, however, we had gone a couple of miles, the little window at my back was opened, and I heard the old lady's voice, asking if I had ever chanced upon a more comfortable country inn or with better beds.

"Not bad, — not bad," said I, peevishly. "I had such a mass of letters to write that I got little sleep. In fact, I scarcely could say I took any rest."

While the old lady expressed her regretful condolences at this, I saw that Miss Herbert pinched her lips together as if to avoid a laugh, and the bitter thought crossed me, "She knows it all!"

"I am easily put out, besides," said I. "That is, at certain times I am easily irritated, and a vulgar German fellow who supped with us last night so ruffled my temper that I assure you he continued to go through my head till morning."

"Oh, don't call him vulgar!" broke in Miss Herbert; "surely there could be nothing more quiet or unpretending than his manners."

"If I were to hunt for an epithet for a month," retorted I, "a more suitable one would never occur to me. The fellow was evidently an actor of some kind, — perhaps a rope-dancer."

She burst in with an exclamation; but at the same time Mrs. Keats interposed, and though her words were perfectly inaudible to me, I had no difficulty in gathering their import, and saw that "the young person" was undergoing a pretty smart lecture for her presumption in daring to differ in opinion with my Royal Highness. I suppose it was very ignoble of me, but I was delighted at it. I was right glad that the old woman administered that sharp castigation, and I burned even with impatience to throw in a shell myself and increase the discomfiture. Mrs. Keats finished her gallop at last, and I took up the running.

"You were fortunate, madam," said I, "in the indisposition that confined you to your room, and which rescued you from the underbred presumption of this man's manners. I have travelled much, I have mixed largely, I may say, with every rank and condition, and in every country of Europe, so that I am not pronouncing the opinion of one totally inadequate to form a judgment —"

"Certainly not, sir. Listen to that, young lady," muttered she, in a sort of under growl.

"In fact," resumed I, "it is one of my especial amusements to observe and note the forms of civilization implied by mere conventional habits. If, from circumstances not necessary to particularize, certain advantages have favored this pursuit —"

When I had reached thus far in my very pompous preface, the clatter of a horse coming up at full speed arrested my attention, and at the very moment the German himself, the identical subject of our talk, dashed up to the carriage window, and with a few polite words handed in a small volume to Miss Herbert, which it seems he had promised to give her, but could not accomplish before, in consequence of the abrupt haste of our departure. The explanation did not occupy an entire minute, and he was gone and out of sight at once. And now the little window was closed, and I could distinctly hear that Mrs. Keats was engaged in one of those salutary exercises by which age communicates its experiences to youth. I wished I could have opened a little chink to listen to it, but I could not do so undetected, so I had to console myself by imagining all the shrewd and disagreeable remarks she must have made. *Morals* has its rhubarb as well as medicine, wholesome, doubtless, when down, but marvellously nauseous and very hard to swallow, and I felt that the young person was getting a full dose; indeed, I could catch two very significant words, which came and came again in the allocution, and the very utterance of which added to their sharpness, — "levity," "encouragement." There they were again!

"Lay it on, old lady," muttered I; "your precepts are sound; never was there a case more meet for their application. Never mind a little pain, either, — one must touch

the quick to make the cautery effectual. She will be all the better for the lesson, and she has well earned it!"

Oh, Potts! Potts! was this not very hard-hearted and ungenerous? Why should the sorrow of that young creature have been a pleasure to you? Is it possible that the mean sentiment of revenge has had any share in this? Are you angry with her that she liked that man's conversation, and turned to *him* in preference to *you*? You surely cannot be actuated by a motive so base as this? Is it for herself, for her own advantage, her preservation, that you are thinking all this time? Of course it is. And there, now, I think I hear her sob. Yes, she is crying; the old lady has really come to the quick, and I believe is not going to stop there.

"Well," thought I, "old ladies are an excellent invention; none of these cutting severities could be done but for them. And they have a patient persistence in this surgery quite wonderful, for when they have flayed the patient all over, they sprinkle on salt as carefully as a pastry-cook frosting a plum-cake."

At last, I did begin to wish it was over. She surely must have addressed herself to every phase of the question in an hour and a half; and yet I could hear her still grinding, grinding on, as though the efficacy of her precepts, like a homœopathic remedy, were to be increased by trituration. Fortunately, we had to halt for fresh horses; and so I got down to chat with them at the carriage-door, and interrupt the lecture. Little was I prepared for the reddened eyes and quivering lips of that poor girl, as she drank off the glass of water she begged me to fetch her, but still less for the few words she contrived to whisper in my ear as I took the glass from her hands.

"I hope you have made me miserable enough *now*."

And with this the window was banged to, and away we went.

CHAPTER XXV.

I MAINTAIN A DIGNIFIED RESERVE.

I WAS so hurt by the last words of Miss Herbert to me, that I maintained throughout the entire day what I meant to be a "dignified reserve," but what I half suspect bore stronger resemblance to a deep sulk. My station had its privileges, and I resolved to take the benefit of them. I dined alone. Yes, on that day I did fall back upon the eminence of my condition, and proudly intimated that I desired solitude. I was delighted to see the dismay this declaration caused. Old Mrs. Keats was speechless with terror. I was looking at her through a chink in the door when Miss Herbert gave my message, and I thought she would have fainted.

"What were his precise words? Give them to me exactly as he uttered them," said she, tremulously, "for there are persons whose intimations are half commands."

"I can scarcely repeat them, madam," said the other, "but their purport was, that we were not to expect him at dinner, that he had ordered it to be served in his own room and at his own hour."

"And this is very probably all your doing," said the old lady, with indignation. "Unaccustomed to any levity of behavior, brought up in a rank where familiarities are never practised, he has been shocked by your conduct with that stranger. Yes, Miss Herbert, I say shocked, because, however harmless in intention, such freedoms are utterly unknown in — in certain circles."

"I am sure, madam," replied she, with a certain amount of spirit, "that you are laboring under a very grave misapprehension. There was no familiarity, no freedom. We talked as I imagine people usually talk when they sit at the same table. Mr. — I scarcely know his name —"

"Nor is it necessary," said the old woman, tartly; "though, if you had, probably this unfortunate incident might not have occurred. Sit down there, however, and write a few lines in my name, hoping that his indisposition may be very slight, and begging to know if he desire to remain here to-morrow and take some repose."

I waited till I saw Miss Herbert open her writing-desk, and then I hastened off to my room to reflect over my answer to her note. Now that the suggestion was made to me, I was pleased with the notion of passing an entire day where we were. The place was Schaffhausen, — the famous fall of the Rhine, — not very much as a cataract, but picturesque withal; pleasant chestnut woods to ramble about, and a nice old inn in a wild old wilderness of a garden that sloped down to the very river.

Strange perversity is it not; but how naturally one likes everything to have some feature or other out of keeping with its intrinsic purport! An inn like an old *château*, a chief-justice that could ride a steeple-chase, a bishop that sings Moore's melodies, have an immense attraction for me. They seem all, as it were, to say, "Don't fancy life is a mere four-roomed house with a door in the middle. Don't imagine that all is humdrum and routine and regular. Notwithstanding his wig and stern black eyebrows, there is a touch of romance in that old Chancellor's heart that you could n't beat out of it with his great mace; and his Grace the Primate there has not forgotten what made the poetry of his life in days before he ever dreamed of charges or triennial visitations."

By these reflections I mean to convey that I am very fond of an inn that does not look like an inn, but resembles a faded old country-house, or a deserted convent, or a disabled mill. This Schaffhausen Gasthaus looked like all three. It was the sort of place one might come to in a long vacation, to live simply and to go early to bed, take monotony as a tonic, and fancying unbroken quiet to be better than quinine.

"Ah!" thought I, "if it had not been for that confounded German, what a paradise might not this have been to me! Down there in that garden, with the din of the waterfall

around us, walking under the old cherry-trees, brushing our way through tangled sweetbriers, and arbutus, and laburnum, what delicious nonsense might I not have poured into her ear! Ay! and not unwillingly had she heard it. That something within that never deceives, that little crimson heart within the rose of conscience, tells me that she liked me, that she was attracted by what, if it were not for shame, I would call the irresistible attractions of my nature; and now this creature of braten and beetroot has spoiled all, jarred the instrument and unstrung the chords that might have yielded me such sweet music."

In thinking over the inadequacy of all human institutions, I have often been struck by the fact that while the law gives the weak man a certain measure of protection against the superior physical strength of the powerful ruffian in the street, it affords none against the assaults of the intellectual bully at a dinner-party. *He* may maltreat you at his pleasure, batter you with his arguments, kick you with inferences, and knock you down with conclusions, and no help for it all!

"Ah, here comes François with the note." I wrote one line in pencil for answer: "I am sensibly touched by your consideration, and will pass to-morrow here." I signed this with a P., which might mean Prince, Potts, or Pottinger. My reply despatched, I began to think how I could improve the opportunity. "I will bring her to book," thought I; "I will have an explanation." I always loved that sort of thing, — there is an almost certainty of emotion; now emotion begets tears; tears, tenderness; tenderness, consolation; and when you reach consolation, you are, so to say, a tenant in possession; your title may be disputable, your lease invalid, still you are there, on the property, and it will take time at least to turn you out. "After all," thought I, "that rude German has but troubled the water for a moment, the pure well of her affections will by this time have regained its calm still surface, and I shall see my image there as before."

My meditations were interrupted, perhaps not unpleasantly. It was the waiter with my dinner. I am not unsocial — I am eminently the reverse — I may say, like most

men who feel themselves conversationally gifted, I like company, I see that my gifts have in such gatherings their natural ascendancy, — and yet, with all this, I have always felt that to dine splendidly, all alone, was a very grand thing. Mind, I don't say it is pleasant or jolly or social, but simply that it is grand to see all that table equipage of crystal and silver spread out for *you* alone; to know that the business of that gorgeous candelabrum is to light *you*; that the two decorous men in black — archdeacons they might be, from the quiet dignity of their manners — are there to wait upon *you*; that the whole sacrifice, from the caviare to the cheese, was a hecatomb to *your* greatness. I repeat, these are all grand and imposing considerations, and there have been times when I have enjoyed these *Lucullus cum Lucullo* festivals more than convivial assemblages. This day was one of these: I lingered over my dinner in delightful dalliance. I partook of nearly every dish, but, with a supreme refinement, ate little of any, as though to imply, "I am accustomed to a very different *cuisine* from this; it is not thus that I fare habitually." And yet I was blandly forgiving, accepting even such humble efforts to please as if they had been successes. The Cliquot was good, and I drank no other wine, though various flasks with tempting titles stood around me.

Dinner over and coffee served, I asked the waiter what resources the place possessed in the way of amusement. He looked blank and even distressed at my question: he had all his life imagined that the Falls sufficed for everything; he had seen the tide of travel halt there to view them for years. Since he was a boy, he had never ceased to witness the yearly recurring round of tourists who came to see, and sketch, and scribble about them, and so he faintly muttered out a remonstrance, —

"Monsieur has not yet visited the Falls."

"The Falls! why, I see them from this, and if I open the window I am stunned with their uproar."

I was really sorry at the pain my hasty speech gave him, for he looked suddenly faint and ill, and after a moment gasped out, —

"But monsieur is surely not going away without a visit to

the cataract? The guide-books give two hours as the very shortest time to see it effectually."

"I only gave ten minutes to Niagara, my good friend," said I, "and would not have spared even that, but that I wanted to hold a sprained ankle under the fall."

He staggered, and had to hold a chair to support himself.

"There is, besides, the Laufen Schloss —"

"As to castles," broke I in, "I have no need to leave my own to see all that mediæval architecture can boast. No, no," sighed I out, "if I am to have new sensations, they must come through some other channel than sight. Have you no theatre?"

"No, sir. None."

"No concert-rooms, no music-garden?"

"None, sir."

"Not even a circus?" said I, peevishly.

"There was, sir, but it was not attended. The strangers all come to see the Falls."

"Confound the Falls! And what became of the circus?"

"Well, they made a bad business of it; got into debt on all sides, for oil, and forage, and printing placards, and so on, and then they beat a sudden retreat one night, and slipped off, all but two, and, indeed, they were about the best of the company; but somehow they lost their way in the forest, and instead of coming up with their companions, found themselves at daybreak at the outside of the town."

"And these two unlucky ones, what were they?"

"One was the chief clown, sir, a German, and the other was a little girl, a Moor they call her; but the cleverest creature to ride or throw somersaults through hoops of the whole of them."

"And how do they live now?"

"Very hardly, I believe, sir; and but for Tintefleck, — that's what they call her, — they might starve; but she goes about with her guitar through the *cafés* of an evening, and as she has a sweet voice, she picks up a few batzen. But the maire, I hear, won't permit this any longer, and says that as they have no passport or papers of any kind, they must be sent over the frontier as vagabonds."

"Let that maire be brought before *me*," said I, with a

haughty indignation. "Let me tell him in a few brief words what I think of his heartless cruelty — But no, I was forgetting, — I am here *incog*. Be careful, my good man, that you do not mention what I have so inadvertently dropped; remember that I am nobody here; I am Number Five and nothing more. Send the unfortunate creatures, however, here, and let me interrogate them. They can be easily found, I suppose?"

"In a moment, sir. They were in the Platz just when I served the pheasant."

"What name does the man bear?"

"I never heard a name for him. Amongst the company he was called Vaterchen, as he was the oldest of them all; and, indeed, they seemed all very fond of him."

"Let Vaterchen and Tintefleck, then, come hither. And bring fresh glasses, waiter."

And I spoke as might an Eastern despot giving his orders for a "nautch;" and then, waving my hand, motioned the messenger away.

CHAPTER XXVI.

VATERCHEN AND TINTEFLECK.

HAD Fortune decreed that I should be rich, I believe I would have been the most popular of men. There is such a natural kindness of disposition in me, blended with the most refined sense of discrimination. I love humanity in the aggregate, and, at the same time, with a rare delicacy of sentiment, I can follow through all the tortuous windings of the heart, and actually sympathize in emotions that I never experienced. No rank is too exalted, no lot too humble, for the exercise of my benevolence. I have sat in my arm-chair with a beating, throbbing heart, as I imagined the troubles of a king, and I have drunk my Bordeaux with tears of gratitude as I fancied myself a peasant with only water to slake his thirst. To a man of highly organized temperament, the privations themselves are not necessary to eliminate the feeling they would suggest. Coarser natures would require starvation to produce the sense of hunger, nakedness to cause that of cold, and so on; the gifted can be in rags, while enclosed in a wadded dressing-gown; they can go supperless to bed after a meal of oysters and toasted cheese; they can, if they will, be fatally wounded as they sit over their wine, or cast away after shipwreck with their feet on the fender. Great privileges all these; happy is he who has them, happy are they amidst whom he tries to spread the blessings of his inheritance!

Amid the many admirable traits which I recognize in myself, — and of which I speak not boastfully, but gratefully, being accidents of my nature as far removed from my own agency as the color of my eyes or the shape of my nose, — of these, I say, I know of none more striking than such as

fit me to be a patron. I am graceful as a lover, touching as a friend, but I am really great as a protector.

Revelling in such sentiments as these, I stood at my window, looking at the effect of moonlight on the Falls. It seemed to me as though in the grand spectacle before my eyes I beheld a sort of illustration of my own nature, wherein generous emotions could come gushing, foaming, and falling, and yet the source be never exhausted, the flood ever at full. I ought parenthetically to observe that the champagne was excellent, and that I had drunk the third glass of the second bottle to the health of the widow Cliquot herself. Thus standing and musing, I was startled by a noise behind me, and, turning round, I saw one of the smallest of men in a little red Greek jacket and short yellow breeches, carefully engaged in spreading a small piece of carpet on the floor, a strip like a very diminutive hearth-rug. This done, he gave a little wild exclamation of "Ho!" and cut a somersault in the air, alighting on the flat of his back, which he announced by a like cry of "Ha!" He was up again, however, in an instant, and repeated the performance three times. He was about, as I judged by the arrangement of certain chairs, to proceed to other exercises equally diverting, when I stopped him by asking who he was.

"Your Excellency," said he, drawing himself up to his full height of, say, four feet, "I am Vaterchen!"

Every one knows what provoking things are certain chance resemblances, how disturbing to the right current of thought, how subverting to the free exercise of reason. Now, this creature before me, in his deeply indented temples, high narrow forehead, aquiline nose, and resolute chin, was marvellously like a certain great field-marshal with whose features, notwithstanding the portraits of him, we are all familiar. It was not of the least use to me that I knew he was not the illustrious general, but simply a mountebank. There were the stern traits, haughty and defiant; and do what I would, the thought of the great man would clash with the capers of the little one. Owing to this impression, it was impossible for me to address him without a certain sense of deference and respect.

"Will you not be seated?" said I, offering him a chair

and taking one myself. He accepted with all the quiet ease of good breeding, and smiled courteously as I filled a glass and passed it towards him.

I pressed my hand across my eyes for a few moments while I reflected, and I muttered to myself, —

“Oh, Potts, if instead of a tumbler this had really been the hero, what an evening might this be! Lives there that man in Europe so capable of feeling in all its intensity the glorious privilege of such a meeting? Who, like you, would listen to the wisdom distilling from those lips? Who would treasure up every trait of voice, accent, and manner, remembering, not alone every anecdote, but every expression? Who, like you, could have gracefully led the conversation so as to range over the whole wide ocean of that great life, taking in battles and sieges and stormings and congresses, and scenes of all that is most varied and exciting in existence? Would not the record of one such night, drawn by you, have been worth all the cold compilations and bleak biographies that ever were written? You would have presented him as he sat there in front of you.” I opened my eyes to paint from the model, and there was the little dog, with his legs straight up on each side of his head and forming a sort of gothic arch over his face. The wretch had done the feat to amuse me, and I almost fainted with horror as I saw it.

“Sit down, sir,” said I, in a voice of stern command. “You little know the misery you have caused me.”

I refilled his glass, and closed my eyes once more. In my old pharmaceutical experiences I had often made bread pills, and remembered well how, almost invariably, they had been deemed successful. What relief from pain to the agonized sufferer had they not given! What slumber to the sleepless! What appetite, what vigor, what excitement! Why should not the same treatment apply to morals as to medicine? Why, with faith to aid one, cannot he induce every wished-for mood of mind and thought? The lay figure to support the drapery suffices for the artist, the Venus herself is in his brain. Now, if that little fellow there would neither cut capers nor speak, I ask no more of him. Let him sit firmly as he does now, staring me boldly in the face that way.

"Yes," said I, "lay your hand on the arm of your chair, so, and let the other be clenched thus." And so I placed him. "Never utter a word, but nod to me at rare intervals."

He has since acknowledged that he believed me to be deranged; but as I seemed a harmless case, and he could rely on his activity for escape, he made no objection to my directions, the less, too, that he enjoyed his wine immensely, and was at liberty to drink as he pleased.

"Now," thought I, "one glance, only one, to see that he poses properly."

All right; nothing could be better. His face was turned slightly to one side, giving what the painters call action to the head, and he was perfect. I now resigned myself to the working of the spell, and already I felt its influence over me. Where and with what was I to begin? Numberless questions thronged to my mind. I wanted to know a thousand disputed things, and fully as many that were only disputed by myself. I felt that as such another opportunity would assuredly never present itself twice in my life, that the really great use of the occasion would be to make every inquiry subsidiary to my own case, — to make all my investigations what the Germans would call "Potts-wise." My intensest anxiety was then to ascertain if, like myself, his Grace started in life with very grand aspirations.

"Did you feel, for instance, when playing practical jokes on the maids of honor in Dublin, some sixty-odd years ago, that you were only, in sportive vein, throwing off so much light ballast to make room for the weightier material that was to steady you in the storm-tossed sea before you? Have you experienced the almost necessity of these little expansions of eccentricity as I have? Was there always in your heart, as a young man, as there is now in mine, a profound contempt for the opinions of your contemporaries? Did you continually find yourself repeating, '*Respice finem!* Mark where I shall be yet'?" There was another investigation which touched me still more closely, but it was long before I could approach it. I saw all the difficulty and delicacy of the inquiry; but, with that same recklessness of consequences which would make me catch at a queen by the

back hair if I was drowning, I clutched at this discovery now, and, although trembling at my boldness, asked, "Was your Grace ever afraid? I know the impertinence of the question, but if you only guessed how it concerns me, you'd forgive it. Nature has made me many things, but not courageous. Nothing on earth could induce me to risk life; the more I reason about it, the greater grows my repugnance. Now, I would like to hear, is this what anatomists call congenital? Am I likely to grow out of it? Shall I ever be a dare-devil, intrepid, fire-eating sort of creature? How will the change come over me? Shall I feel it coming? Will it come from within, or through external agencies? And when it has arrived, what shall I become? Am I destined to drive the Zouaves into the sea by a bayonet charge of the North Cork Rifles, or shall I only be great in council, and take weekly trips in the 'Fairy' to Cowes? I'd like to know this, and begin a course of preparation for my position, as I once knew of a militia captain who hardened himself for a campaign by sleeping every night with his head on the window-stool."

As I opened my eyes, I saw the stern features in front of me. I thought the words, "I was never afraid, sir!" rang through my brain till they filled every ventricle with their din.

"Not at Assaye?"

"No, sir."

"Not at the Douro?"

"No, sir."

"Not at Torres Vedras?"

"I tell you again, no, sir!"

Whether I uttered this last with any uncommon degree of vehemence or not, I so frightened Vaterchen that he cut a somersault clean over the chair, and stood grinning at me through the rails at the back of it. I motioned to him to be reseated, while, passing my hand across my brow, I waved away the bright illusions that beset me, and, with a heavy sigh, re-entered the dull world of reality.

"You are a clown," said I, meditatively. "What is a clown?"

He did not answer me in words, but, placing his hands

on his knees, stared at me steadfastly, and then, having fixed my attention, his face performed a series of the most fearful contortions I ever beheld. With one horrible spasm he made his mouth appear to stretch from ear to ear; with another, his nose wagged from side to side; with a third, his eyebrows went up and down alternately, giving the different sides of his face two directly antagonistic expressions. I was shocked and horrified, and called to him to desist.

"And yet," thought I, "there are natures who can delight in these, and see in them matter for mirth and laughter!"

"Old man," said I, gravely, "has it ever occurred to you that in this horrible commixture of expression, wherein grief wars with joy and sadness with levity, you are like one who, with a noble instrument before him, should, instead of sweet sounds of harmony, produce wild, unearthly discords, the jangling bursts of fiend-like voices?"

"The Tintefleck can play indifferently well, your Excellency," said he, humbly. "I never had any skill that way myself."

Oh, what a *crassa natura* was here! What a triple wall of dulness surrounds such dark intelligences!

"And where is the Tintefleck? Why is she not here?" asked I, anxious to remove the discussion to a ground of more equality.

"She is without, your Excellency. She did not dare to present herself till your Excellency had desired, and is waiting in the corridor."

"Let her come in," said I, grandly; and I drew my chair to a distant corner of the room so as to give them a wider area to appear in, while I could, at the same time, assume that attitude of splendid ease and graceful protection I have seen a prince accomplish on the stage at the moment the ballet is about to begin. The door opened, and Vaterchen entered, leading Tintefleck by the hand.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW SOCIAL PREJUDICES.

I WAS quite right, — Tintefleck's *entrée* was quite dramatic. She tripped into the room with a short step, nor arrested her run till she came close to me, when, with a deep courtesy, she bent down very low, and then, with a single spring backward, retreated almost to the door again. She was very pretty, — dark enough to be a Moor, but with a rich brilliancy of skin never seen amongst that race, for she was a Calabrian; and as she stood there with her arms crossed before her, and one leg firmly advanced, and with the foot — a very pretty foot — well planted, she was like — all the Italian peasants one has seen in the National Gallery for years back. There was the same look, half shy; the same elevation of sentiment in the brow, and the same coarseness of the mouth; plenty of energy, enough and to spare of daring; but no timidity, no gentleness.

"What is she saying?" asked I of the old man, as I overheard a whisper pass between them. "Tell me what she has just said to you."

"It is nothing, your Excellency, — she is a fool."

"That she may be, but I insist on hearing what it was she said."

He seemed embarrassed and ashamed, and, instead of replying to me, turned to address some words of reproach to the girl.

"I am waiting for your answer," said I, peremptorily.

"It is the saucy way she has gotten, your Excellency, all from over-flattery; and now that she sees that there is no audience here, none but your Excellency, she is impatient to be off again. She'll never do anything for us on the night of a thin house."

"Is this the truth, Tintefleck?" asked I.

With a wild volubility, of which I could not gather a word, but every accent of which indicated passion, if not anger, she poured out something to the other, and then turned as if to leave the room. He interposed quickly, and spoke to her, at first angrily, but at last in a soothing and entreating tone, which seemed gradually to calm her.

"There is more in this than you have told, Vaterchen," said I. "Let me know at once why she is impatient to get away."

"I would leave it to herself to tell your Excellency," said he, with much confusion, "but that you could not understand her mountain dialect. The fact is," added he, after a great struggle with himself, — "the fact is, she is offended at your calling her 'Tintefleck.' She is satisfied to be so named amongst ourselves, where we all have similar nicknames; but that you, a great personage, high and rich and titled, should do so, wounds her deeply. Had you said —"

Here he whispered me in my ear, and, almost inadvertently, I repeated after him, "Catinka."

"*Si, si, Catinka,*" said she, while her eyes sparkled with an expression of wildest delight, and at the same instant she bounded forward and kissed my hand twice over.

I was glad to have made my peace, and, placing a chair for her at the table, I filled out a glass of wine and presented it. She only shook her head in dissent, and pushed it away.

"She has odd ways in everything," said the old man; "she never eats but bread and water. It is her notion that if she were to taste other food she'd lose her gift of fortune-telling."

"So, then, she reads destiny too?" said I, in astonishment.

Before I could inquire further, she swept her hands across the strings of her guitar, and broke out into a little peasant song. It was very monotonous, but pleasing. Of course, I knew nothing of the words nor the meaning, but it seemed as though one thought kept ever and anon recurring in the melody, and would continue to rise to the surface, like the air-bubbles in a well. Satisfied, apparently, by the evi-



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Tintefleck.

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dences of my approval, she had no sooner finished than she began another. This was somewhat more pretentious, and, from what I could gather, represented a parting scene between a lover and his mistress. There was, at least, a certain action in the song which intimated this. The fervent earnestness of the lover, his entreaties, his prayers, and at last his threatenings, were all given with effect, and there was actually good acting in the stolid defiance she opposed to all; she rejected his vows, refused his pledges, scorned his menaces; but when he had gone and left her, when she saw herself alone and desolate, then came out a gush of the most passionate sorrow, all the pent-up misery of a heart that seemed to burst with its weight of agony.

If I was in a measure entranced while she was singing, such was the tension of my nerves as I listened, that I was heartily glad when it was over. As for her, she seemed so overcome by the emotion she had parodied, that she bent her head down, covered her face with her hands, and sobbed twice or thrice convulsively.

I turned towards Vaterchen to ask him some question, I forget what, but the little fellow had made such good use of the decanter beside him, while the music went on, that his cheeks were a bright crimson, and his little round eyes shone like coals of fire.

"This young creature should never have fallen amongst such as you!" said I, indignantly; "she has feeling and tenderness, — the powers of expression she wields all evidence a great and gifted nature. She has, so to say, noble qualities."

"Noble, indeed!" croaked out the little wretch, with a voice hoarse from the strong Burgundy.

"She might, with proper culture, adorn a very different sphere," said I, angrily. "Many have climbed the ladder of life with humbler pretensions."

"Ay, and stand on one leg on top of it, playing the tambourine all the time," hiccuped he, in reply.

I did not fancy the way he carried out my figure, but went on with my reflections, —

"Some, but they are few, achieve greatness at a bound —"

"That's what she does," broke he in. "Twelve hoops and a drum behind them, at one spring; she comes through like a flying-fish."

I don't know what angry rejoinder was on my lips to this speech, when there came a tap at my door. I arose at once and opened it. It was François, with a polite message from Mrs. Keats, to say how happy it would make her "if I felt well enough to join her and Miss Herbert at tea." For a second or two I knew not what to reply. That I was "well enough," François was sure to report, and in my flushed condition I was, perhaps, the picture of an exaggerated state of convalescence; so, after a moment's hesitation, I muttered out a blundering excuse, on the plea of having a couple of friends with me, "who had chanced to be just passing through the town on their way to Italy."

I did not think François had time to report my answer, when I heard him again at the door. It was, with his mistress's compliments, to say, she "would be charmed if I would induce my friends to accompany me."

I had to hold my hand on my side with laughter as I heard this message, so absurd was the proposition, and so ridiculous seemed the notion of it. This, I say, was the first impression made upon my mind; and then, almost as suddenly, there came another and very different one. "What is the mission you have embraced, Potts?" asked I of myself. "If it have a but or an object, is it not to overthrow the mean and unjust prejudices, the miserable class distinctions, that separate the rich from the poor, the great from the humble, the gifted from the ignorant? Have you ever proposed to yourself a nobler conquest than over that vulgar tyranny by which prosperity lords it over humble fortune? Have you imagined a higher triumph than to make the man of purple and fine linen feel happy in the companionship of him in smock-frock and high-lows? Could you ask for a happier occasion to open the campaign than this? Mrs. Keats is an admirable representative of her class; she has all the rigid prejudices of her condition; her sympathies may rise, but they never fall; she can feel for the sorrows of the well-born, she has no concern for vulgar afflictions. How admirable the opportunity to show her

that grace and genius and beauty are of all ranks! And Miss Herbert, too, what a test it will be of *her*! If she really have greatness of soul, if there be in her nature a spirit that rises above petty conventionalities and miserable ceremonials, she will take this young creature to her heart like a sister. I think I see them with arms entwined, — two lovely flowers on one stalk, — the dark crimson rose and the pale hyacinth! Oh, Potts! this would be a nobler victory to achieve than to rend battalions with grape, or ride down squadrons with the crash of cavalry.” — “I will come, François,” said I. “Tell Mrs. Keats that she may expect us immediately.” I took especial care in my dialogue to keep this prying fellow outside the room, and to interpose in every attempt that he made to obtain a peep within. In this I perfectly succeeded, and dismissed him, without his being able to report any one circumstance about my two travelling friends.

My next task was to inform them of my intentions on their behalf; nor was this so easy as might be imagined, for Vaterchen had indulged very freely with the wine, and all the mountains of Calabria lay between myself and Tintefleck. With a great exercise of ingenuity, and more of patience, I did at last succeed in making known to the old fellow that a lady of the highest station and her friend were curious to see them. He only caught my meaning after some time; but when he had surmounted the difficulty, as though to show me how thoroughly he understood the request, and how nicely he appreciated its object, he began a series of face contortions of the most dreadful kind, being a sort of programme of what he intended to exhibit to the distinguished company. I repressed this firmly, severely. I explained that an artist in all the relations of private life should be ever the gentleman; that the habits of the stage were no more necessary to carry into the world than the costume. I dilated upon the fact that John Kemble had been deemed fitting company by the first gentleman of Europe; and that if his manner could have exposed him to a criticism, it was in, perhaps, a slight tendency to an over-reserve, a cold and almost stern dignity. I’m not sure Vaterchen followed me completely, nor understood the anecdotes I introduced

about Edmund Kean and Lord Byron; but I now addressed myself pictorially to Tintefleck, — pictorially, I say, for words were hopeless. I signified that a *très grande dame* was about to receive her. I arose, with my skirts expanded in both hands, made a reverent courtesy, throwing my head well back, looking every inch a duchess. But, alas for my powers of representation! she burst into a hearty laugh, and had at last to lay her head on Vaterchen's shoulder out of pure exhaustion.

"Explain to her what I have told you, sir, and do not sit grinning at me there, like a baboon," said I, in a severe voice.

I cannot say how he acquitted himself, but I could gather that a very lively altercation ensued, and it seemed to me as though she resolutely refused to subject herself to any further ordeals of what academicians call a "private view." No; she was ready for the ring and the sawdust, and the drolleries of the men with chalk on their faces, but she would not accept high life on any terms. By degrees, and by arguments of his own ingenious devising, however, he did succeed, and at last she arose with a bound, and cried out, "Eccomi!"

"Remember," said I to Vaterchen, as we left the room, "I am doing that which few would have the courage to dare. It will depend upon the dignity of your conduct, the grace of your manners, the well-bred ease of your address, to make me feel proud of my intrepidity, or, sad and painful possibility, retire covered with ineffable shame and discomfiture. Do you comprehend me?"

"Perfectly," said he, standing erect, and giving even in his attitude a sort of bail bond for future dignity. "Lead on!"

This was more familiar than he had been yet; but I ascribed it to the tension of nerves strung to a high purpose, and rendering him thus inaccessible to other thoughts than of the enterprise before him.

As I neared the door of Mrs. Keats's apartment, I hesitated as to how I should enter. Ought I to precede my friends, and present them as they followed? Or would it seem more easy and more assured if I were to give my arm

to Tintefleck, leaving Vaterchen to bring up the rear? After much deliberation, this appeared to be the better course, seeming to take for granted that, although some peculiarities of costume might ask for explanation later on, I was about to present a very eligible and charming addition to the company.

I am scarcely able to say whether I was or was not reassured by the mode in which she accepted the offer of my arm. At first, the proposition appeared unintelligible, and she looked at me with one of those wide-eyed stares, as though to say, "What new gymnastic is this? What *tour de force*, of which I never heard before?" and then, with a sort of jerk, she threw my arm up in the air and made a pirouette under it, of some half-dozen whirls.

Half reprovingly I shook my head, and offered her my hand. This she understood at once. She recognized such a mode of approach as legitimate and proper, and with an artistic shake of her drapery with the other hand, and a confident smile, she signified she was ready to go "on."

I was once on a time thrown over a horse's head into a slate quarry; a very considerable drop it was, and nearly fatal. On another occasion I was carried in a small boat over the fall of a salmon weir, and hurried along in the flood for almost three hundred yards. Each of these was a situation of excitement and peril, and with considerable confusion as the consequence; and yet I could deliberately recount you every passing phase of my terror, from my first fright down to my complete unconsciousness, with such small traits as would guarantee truthfulness; while, of the scene upon which I now adventured, I preserve nothing beyond the vaguest and most unconnected memory.

I remember my advance into the middle of the room. I have a recollection of a large tea-urn, and beyond it a lady in a turban; another in long ringlets there was. The urn made a noise like a small steamer, and there was a confusion of voices — about what, I cannot tell — that increased the uproar, and we were all standing up and all talking together; and there was what seemed an angry discussion, and then the large turban and the ringlets swept haughtily past me. The turban said, "This is too much, sir!" and

ringlets added, "Far too much, sir!" and as they reached the door, there was Vaterchen on his head, with a branch of candles between his feet to light them out, and Tintefleck, screaming with laughter, threw herself into an arm-chair, and clapped a most riotous applause.

I stood a moment almost transfixed, then dashed out of the room, hurried upstairs to my chamber, bolted the door, drew a great clothes-press against it for further security, and then threw myself upon my bed in one of those paroxysms of mad confusion, in which a man cannot say whether he is on the verge of inevitable ruin, or has just been rescued from a dreadful fate. I would not, if even I could, recount all that I suffered that night. There was not a scene of open shame and disgrace that I did not picture to myself as incurring. I was everywhere in the stocks or the pillory. I wore a wooden placard on my breast, inscribed, "Potts the Impostor." I was running at top speed before hooting and yelling crowds. I was standing with a circle of protecting policemen amidst a mob eager to tear me to pieces. I was sitting on a hard stool while my hair was being cropped *à la* Pentonville, and a gray suit lay ready for me when it was done. But enough of such a dreary record. I believe I cried myself to sleep at last, and so soundly, too, that it was very late in the afternoon ere I awoke. It was the sight of the barricade I had erected at my door gave me a clew to the past, and again I buried my face in my hands, and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT.

I COULD not hear the loud and repeated knockings which were made at my door, as at first waiters, and then the landlord himself, endeavored to gain admittance. At length a ladder was placed at the window, and a courageous individual, duly armed, appeared at my casement and summoned me to surrender. With what unspeakable relief did I learn that it was not to apprehend or arrest me that all these measures were taken: they were simply the promptings of a graceful benevolence; a sort of rumored intimation having got about, that I had taken prussic acid, or was being done to death by charcoal. Imagine a prisoner in a condemned cell suddenly awakened, and hearing that the crowd around him consisted not of the ordinary, the sheriff, Mr. Calcraft and Co., but a deputation of respectable citizens come to offer the representation of their borough or a piece of plate, and then you can have a mild conception of the pleasant revulsion of my feelings. I thanked my public in a short but appropriate address. I assured them, although there was a popular prejudice about doing this sort of thing in November in England, that it was deemed quite unreasonable at other times, and that really, in these days of domestic arsenic and conjugal strychnine, nothing but an unreasonable impatience would make a man self-destructive, — suicide arguing that as a man was really so utterly valueless, it was worth nobody's while to get rid of him. My explanation over, I ordered breakfast.

"Why not dinner?" said the waiter. "It is close on four o'clock."

"No," said I; "the ladies will expect me at dinner."

"The ladies are near Constance by this, or else the roads are worse than we thought them."

"Near Constance! Do you mean to say they have gone?"

"Yes, sir, at daybreak; or, indeed, I might say before daybreak."

"Gone! actually gone!" was all that I could utter.

"They never went to bed last night, sir; the old lady was taken very ill after tea, and all the house running here and there for doctors and remedies, and the young lady, though she bore up so well, they tell me she fainted when she was alone in her own room. In fact, it was a piece of confusion and trouble until they started, and we may say, none of us had a moment's peace till we saw them off."

"And how came it that I was never called?"

"I believe, sir, but I'm not sure, the landlord tried to awake you. At all events, he has a note for you now, for I saw the old lady place it in his hand."

"Fetch it at once," said I; and when he left the room, I threw some water over my face, and tried to rally all my faculties to meet the occasion.

When the waiter reappeared with the note, I bade him leave it on the table; I could not venture to read it while he was in the room. At length he went away, and I opened it. These were the contents:—

"SIR,— When a person of your rank abuses the privilege of his station, it is supposed that he means to rebuke. Although innocent of any cause for your displeasure, I have preferred to withdraw myself from your notice than incur the chance of so severe a reprimand a second time.

"I am, sir, with unfeigned sorrow and humility, your most devoted follower and servant,

"MARTHA KEATS.

"To the — de —"

This was the whole of it; not a great deal as correspondence, but matter enough for much thought and much misery. After a long and painful review of my conduct, one startling fact stood prominently forward, which was, that I had done something which, had it been the act of a royal prince,

would yet have been unpardonable, but which, if known to emanate from one such as myself, would have been a downright outrage.

I went into the whole case, as a man who detests figures might have gone into a long and complicated account; and just as he would skip small sums, and pay little heed to fractions, I aimed at arriving at some grand solid balance for or against myself.

I felt, that if asked to produce my books, they might run this wise: Potts, on the credit side, a philanthropist, self-denying, generous, and trustful; one eager to do good, thinking no evil of his neighbor, hopeful of everybody, anxious to establish that brotherhood amongst men which, however varied the station, could and ought to subsist, and which needs but the connecting link of one sympathetic existence to establish. On the other side, Potts, I grieve to say, appeared that which Ferdinand Mendez Pinto was said to be.

When I had rallied a bit from the stunning effect of this disagreeable "total," I began to wish that I had somebody to argue the matter out with me. The way I would put my case would be thus: "Has not—from the time of Martius Curtius down to the late Mr. Sadlier, of banking celebrity—the sacrifice of one man for the benefit of his fellows, been recognized as the noblest exposition of heroism? Now, although it is much to give up life for the advantage of others, it is far more to surrender one's identity, to abandon that grand capital Ego! which gives a man his self-esteem and suggests his self-preservation. And who, I would ask, does this so thoroughly as the man who everlastingly palms himself upon the world for that which he is not? According to the greatest happiness principle, this man may be a real boon to humanity. He feeds this one with hope, the other with flattery; he bestows courage on the weak, confidence on the wavering. The rich man can give of his abundance, but it is out of his very poverty this poor fellow has to bestow all. Like the spider, he has to weave his web from his own vitals, and like the same spider he may be swept away by some pretentious affectation of propriety."

While I thus argued, the waiter came in to serve dinner.

It looked all appetizing and nice; but I could not touch a morsel. I was sick at heart; Kate Herbert's last look as she quitted the room was ever before me. Those dark gray eyes—which you stupid folk will go on calling blue—have a sort of reproachful power in them very remarkable. They don't flash out in anger like black eyes, or sparkle in fierceness like hazel; but they emit a sort of steady, fixed, concentrated light, that seems to imply that they have looked thoroughly into you, and come back very sad and very sorry for the inquiry. I thought of the happy days I had passed beside her; I recalled her low and gentle voice, her sweet, half-sad smile, and her playful laugh, and I said, "Have I lost all these forever, and how? What stupid folly possessed me last evening? How could I have been so idiotic as not to see that I was committing the rankest of all enormities? How should I, in my insignificance, dare to assail the barriers and defences which civilization has established, and guards amongst its best prerogatives? Was this old buffoon, was this piece of tawdry fringe and spangles, a fitting company for that fair and gentle girl? How artistically false, too, was the position I had taken! Interweaving into my ideal life these coarse realities, was the same sort of outrage as shocks one in some of the Venetian churches, where a lovely Madonna, the work of a great hand, may be seen bedizened and disfigured with precious stones over her drapery. In this was I violating the whole poetry of my existence. These figures were as much out of keeping as would be a couple of Ostade's Boors in a grand Scripture piece by Domenichino.

"And yet, Potts," thought I, "they were *really* living creatures. They had hearts for joy and sorrow and hope, and the rest of it. They were pilgrims travelling the self-same road as you were. They were not illusions, but flesh and blood folk, that would shiver when cold, and die of hunger if starved. Were they not, then, as such, of more account than all your mere imaginings? Would not the least of their daily miseries outweigh a whole bushel of fancied sorrow? And is it not a poor selfishness on your part, when you deem some airy conception of your brain of more account than that poor old man and that dark-eyed

girl? Last of all, are they not, in all their ragged finery, more 'really true men' than you yourself, Potts, living in a maze of delusions? They only act when the sawdust is raked and the lamps are lighted; but you are *en scène* from dawn to dark, and only lay down one motley to don another. Is not this wretched? Is it not ignoble? In all these changes of character, how much of the real man will be left behind? Will there be one morsel of honest flesh, when all the lacquer of paint is washed off? And was it—oh, was it for this you first adventured out on the wide ocean of life?"

I passed the evening and a great part of the night in such self-accusings, and then I addressed myself to action. I bethought me of my future, and with whom and where and how it might be passed. The bag of money intrusted to me by the Minister to pay the charges of the road was hanging where I had placed it, — on the curtain-holder. I opened it, and found a hundred and forty gold Napoleons, and some ten or twelve pounds in silver. I next set to count over my own especial hoard; it was a fraction under a thousand francs. Forty pounds was truly a very small sum wherewith to confront a world to which I brought not any art, or trade, or means of livelihood; I say forty, because I had not the shadow of a pretext for touching the other sum, and I resolved at once to transmit it to the owner. Now, what could be done with so humble a capital? I had heard of a great general who once pawned a valuable sword—a sword of honor it was—wherewith to buy a horse, and, so mounted, he went forth over the Alps, and conquered a kingdom. The story had no moral for me, for somehow I did not feel as though I were the stuff that conquers kingdoms, and yet there must surely be a vast number of men in life with about the same sort of faculties, merits, and demerits as I have. There must be a numerous Potts family in every land, well-meaning, right-intentioned, worthless creatures, who, out of a supposed willingness to do anything, always end in doing nothing. Such people, it must be inferred, live upon what are called their wits, or, in other words, trade upon the daily accidents of life, and the use to which they can turn the traits of those they meet with.

I was resolved not to descend to this; no, I had determined to say adieu to all masquerading, and be simply Potts, the druggist's son, one who had once dreamed of great ambitions, but had taken the wrong road to them. I would from this hour be an honest, truth-speaking, simple-hearted creature. What the world might henceforth accord me of its sympathy should be tendered on honest grounds; nay, more, in the spirit of those devotees who inspire themselves with piety by privations, I resolved on a course of self-mortification, I would not rest till I had made my former self expiate all the vainglorious wantonness of the past, and pay in severe penance for every transgression I had committed. I began boldly with my reformation. I sat down and wrote thus: —

“To Mr. DYCKER, Stephen's-green, Dublin.

“The gentleman who took away a dun pony from your livery stables in the month of May last, and who, from certain circumstances, has not been able to restore the animal, sends herewith twenty pounds as his probable value. If Mr. D. conscientiously considers the sum insufficient, the sender will at some future time, he hopes, make good the difference.”

Doubtless my esteemed reader will say at this place, “The fellow could n't do less; he need not vaunt himself on a commonplace act of honesty, which, after all, might have been suggested by certain fears of future consequences. His indiscretion amounted to horse-stealing, and horse-stealing is a felony.”

All true, every word of it, most upright of judges: I was simply doing what I ought, or rather what I ought long since to have done. But now, let me ask, is this, after all, the invariable course in life, and is there no merit in doing what one ought when every temptation points to the other direction? and lastly, is it nothing to do what a man ought, when the doing costs exactly the half of all he has in the world?

Now, if I were, instead of being Potts, a certain great writer that we all know and delight in, I would improve the occasion here by asking my reader—does he always himself do the right thing? I would say to him, perhaps

with all haste to anticipate his answer, "Of course you do. You never pinch your children, or kick your wife out of bed; you are a model father and a churchwarden; but I am only a poor apothecary's son brought up in precepts of thrift and the Dublin Pharmacopœia;" and I own to you, when I placed the half of my twenty-pound crisp clean bank note inside of that letter, I felt I was figuratively cutting myself in two. But I did it "like a man," if that be a proper phrase for an act which I thought godlike. And oh, take my word for it, when a sacrifice has n't cost you a coach-load of regrets and a shopful of hesitations about making it, it is of little worth. There's a wide difference between the gift of a sheep from an Australian farmer, or the present of a child's pet lamb, even though the sheep be twice the size of the lamb.

I gave myself no small praise for what I had done, much figurative patting on the back, and a vast deal of that very ambiguous consolation which beggars in Catholic countries bestow in change for alms, by assurance that it will be remembered to you in purgatory.

"Well," thought I, "the occasion is n't very far off, for my purgatory begins to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON FOOT AND IN LOW COMPANY.

I WAS in a tourist locality, and easily provided myself with a light equipment for the road, resolved at once to take the footpath in life and "seek my fortune." I use these words simply as the expression of the utter uncertainty which prevailed as to whither I should go, and what do when I got there.

If there be few more joyous things in life than to start off on foot with three or four choice companions, to ramble through some fine country rich in scenery, varied in character and interesting in story, there are few more lonely sensations than to set out by oneself, not very decided what way to take, and with very little money to take it.

One of the most grievous features of small means is, certainly, the almost exclusive occupation it gives the mind as to every, even the most trivial, incident that involves cost. Instead of dining on fish and fowl and fruit, you feel eating so many groschen and kreutzers. You are *not* drinking wine, your beverage is a solution of copper batzen in vinegar! When you poke the fire, every spark that flies up the chimney is a baiocco! You come at last to suspect that the sun won't warm you for nothing, and that the very breeze that cooled your brow is only waiting round the corner to ask "for something for himself."

When the rich man lives sparingly, the conscious power of the wealth he might employ if he pleased, sustains him. The poor fellow has no such consolation to fall back on; the closer his coat is examined, the more threadbare will it appear. If it were simply that he dressed humbly and fared coarsely, it might be borne well, but it is the hourly depreciation that poverty is exposed to, makes its true grievance. "An ill-looking"—this means, generally, ill-

dressed — “an ill-looking fellow had been seen about the premises at night-fall,” says the police report. “A very suspicious character had asked for a bed; his wardrobe was in a ‘spotted handkerchief.’ The waiter remembers that a fellow, much travel-stained and weary, stopped at the door that evening and asked if there was any cheap house of entertainment in the village.” Heaven help the poor wayfarer if any one has been robbed, any house broken into, any rick set fire to, while he passed through that locality. There is no need of a crowd of witnesses to convict him, since every bend in his hat, every tear in his coat, and every rent in his shoes are evidence against him.

If I thought over these things in sorrow and humiliation, it was in a very proud spirit that I called to mind how, on that same morning, I deposited the bag with all the money in Messrs. Haber’s bank, saw the contents duly counted over, replaced and sealed up, and then addressed to Her Majesty’s Minister at Kalbratonsstadt, taking a receipt for the same. “This was only just common honesty,” says the reader. Oh, if there is an absurd collocation of words, it is that! Common honesty! why, there is nothing in this world so perfectly, so totally uncommon! Never, I beseech you, undervalue the waiter who restores the ring you dropped in the coffee-room; nor hold him cheaply who gives back the umbrella you left in the cab. These seem such easy things to do, but they are not easy. Men are more or less Cornish wreckers in life, and very apt to regard the lost article as treasure-trove. I have said all this to you, amiable reader, that you may know what it cost me, on that same morning, not to be a rogue, and not to enrich myself with the goods of another.

I underwent a very long and searching self-examination to ascertain why it was I had not appropriated that bag, — an offence which, legally speaking, would only amount to a breach of trust. I said, “Is it that you had no need of the money, Potts? Did you feel that your own means were ample enough? Was it that your philosophy had made you regard gold as mere dross, and then think that the load was a burden? Or, taking higher ground, had you recalled the first teachings of your venerable parent, that good man and

careful apothecary, who had given you your first perceptions of right and wrong?" I fear that I was obliged to say No, in turn, to each of these queries. I would have been very glad to be right, proud to have been a philosopher, overjoyed to feel myself swayed by moral motives, but I could not palm the imposition on my conscience, and had honestly to own that the real reason of my conduct was — I was in love! There was the whole of it!

There was an old sultan once so impressed with an ill notion of the sex, that whenever a tale of misfortune or disgrace reached him, his only inquiry as to the source of the evil was, Who was she? Now, my experiences of life have travelled in another direction, and whenever I read of some noble piece of heroism or some daring act of self-devotion, I don't ask whether he got the Bath or the Victoria Cross, if he were made a governor here or a vice-governor there, but who was She that prompted this glorious deed? I'd like to know all about *her*: the color of her eyes, her hair; was she slender or plump; was she fiery or gentle; was it an old attachment or an acute attack coming after a paroxysm at first sight?

If I were the great chief of some great public department where all my subordinates were obliged to give heavy security for their honesty, I would neither ask for bail bonds or sureties, but I'd say, "Have you got a wife, or a sweetheart? Either will do. Let me look at her. If she be worthy an honest man's love, I am satisfied; mount your high stool and write away."

Oh, how I longed to stand aright in that dear girl's eyes, that she should see me worthy of her! Had she yielded to all my wayward notions and rambling opinions, giving way either in careless indolence or out of inability to dispute them, she had never made the deep impression on my heart. It was because she had bravely asserted her own independence, never conceding where unconvinced, never yielding where unvanquished, that I loved her. What a stupid revery was that of mine when I fancied her one of those strong-minded, determined women, — a thickly shod, umbrella-carrying female, who can travel alone and pass her trunk through a custom-house. No, she was delicate, timid,

and gentle; there was no over-confidence in her, nor the slightest pretension. Rule me? Not a bit of it. Guide, direct, support, confirm, sustain me; elevate my sentiments, cheer me on my road in life, making all evil odious in my eyes, and the good to seem better!

I verily believe, with such a woman, an humble condition in life offers more chances of happiness than a state of wealth and splendor. If the best prizes of life are to be picked up around a man's fireside, moderate means, conducting as they do to a home life, would point more certainly to these than all the splendor of grand receptions. If I were, say, a village doctor, a schoolmaster; if I were able to eke out subsistence in some occupation, whose pursuit might place me sufficiently favorably in her eyes. I don't like grocery, for instance, or even "dry goods," but something — it's no fault of mine if the English language be cramped and limited, and that I must employ the odious word "genteel," but it conveys, in a fashion, all that I aim at.

I began to think how this was to be done. I might return to my own country, go back to Dublin, and become Potts and Son, — at least son! A very horrid thought and very hard to adopt.

I might take a German degree in physic, and become an English doctor, say at Baden, Ems, Geneva, or some other resort of my countrymen on the Continent. I might give lectures, I scarcely well knew on what, still less to whom; or I could start as Professor Potts, and instruct foreigners in Shakspeare. There were at least "three courses" open to me; and to consider them the better, I filled my pipe, and strolled off the high-road into a shady copse of fine beech-trees, at the foot of one of which, and close to a clear little rivulet, I threw myself at full length, and thus, like Tityrus, enjoyed the leafy shade, making my meerscham do duty for the shepherd's reed.

I had not been long thus, when I heard the footsteps of some persons on the road, and shortly after, the sound discontinuing, I judged that they must have crossed into the sward beneath the wood. As I listened I detected voices, and the next moment two figures emerged from the cover and stood before me: they were Vaterchen and Tintefleck.

"Sit down," said I, pointing to each in turn to take a place at either side of me. They had, it is true, been the cause of the great calamity of my life, but in no sense was the fault theirs, and I wished to show that I was generous and open-minded. Vaterchen acceded to my repeated invitation with a courteous humility, and seated himself at a little distance off; but Tintefleck threw herself on the grass, and with such a careless *abandon* that her hair escaped from the net that held it, and fell in great wavy masses across my feet.

"Ay," thought I, as I looked at the graceful outlines of her finely shaped figure, "here is the Amaryllis come to complete the tableau; only I would wish fewer spangles, and a little more simplicity."

I saw that it was necessary to reassure Vaterchen as to my perfect sanity by some explanation as to my strange mode of travelling, and told him briefly, "that it was a caprice common enough with my countrymen to assume the knapsack, and take the road on foot; that we fancied in this wise we obtained a nearer view of life, and at least gained companionship with many from whom the accident of station might exclude us." I said this with an artful delicacy, meant to imply that I was pointing at a very great and valuable privilege of pedestrianism.

He smiled with a sad, a very sad expression on his features, "But in what wise, highly honored sir?"—he addressed me always as *Hoch Ge-ehrter Herr*,—"could you promise to yourself advantage from such associations as these? I cannot believe you would condescend to know us simply to carry away in memory the little traits that must needs distinguish such lives as ours. I would not insult my respect for you by supposing that you come amongst us to note the absurd contrast between our real wretchedness and our mock gayety; and yet what else is there to gain? What can the poor mountebank teach you beyond this?"

"Much," said I, with fervor, as I grasped his hand, and shook it heartily; "much, if you only gave me this one lesson that I now listen to, and I learn that a man's heart can beat as truthfully under motley as under the embroidered coat of a minister. The man who speaks as you do, can teach me much."

He gave a short but heavy sigh, and turned away his head. He arose after a few minutes, and, going gently across the grass, spread his handkerchief over the head and face of the girl, who had at once fallen into a deep sleep.

"Poor thing," muttered he, "it is well she *can* sleep! She has eaten nothing to-day!"

"But, surely," said I, "there is some village, or some wayside inn near this —"

"Yes, there is the 'Eckstein,' a little public about two miles further; but we did n't care to reach it before nightfall. It is so painful to pass many hours in a place and never call for anything; one is ill-looking on, and uncomfortable from it; and as we have only what would pay for our supper and lodging, we thought we'd wear away the noon in the forest here, and arrive at the inn by close of day."

"Let me be your travelling-companion for to-day," said I, "and let us push forward and have our dinner together. Yes, yes, there is far less of condescension in the offer than you suspect. I am neither great nor milor, I am one of a class like your own, Vaterchen, and what I do for you to-day some one else will as probably do for me to-morrow."

Say what I could, the old man would persist in believing that this was only another of those eccentricities for which Englishmen are famed; and though, with the tact of a native good breeding, he showed no persistence in opposition, I saw plainly enough that he was unconvinced by all my arguments.

While the girl slept, I asked him how he chanced upon the choice of his present mode of life, since there were many things in his tone and manner that struck me as strangely unlike what I should have ascribed to his order.

"It is a very short story," said he; "five minutes will tell it, otherwise I might scruple to impose on your patience. It was thus I became what you see me."

Short as the narrative was, I must keep it for another page.

CHAPTER XXX.

VATERCHEN'S NARRATIVE.

I GIVE the old man's story, as nearly as I can, the way he told it.

"There is a little village on the Lago di Guarda, called Caprini. My family had lived there for some generations. We had a little wine-shop, and though not a very pretentious one, it was the best in the place, and much frequented by the inhabitants. My father was in considerable repute while he lived; he was twice named Syndic of Caprini, and I myself once held that dignity. You may not know, perhaps, that the office is one filled at the choice of the townsfolk, and not nominated by the Government. Still the crown has its influence in the selection, and likes well to see one of its own partisans in power, and, when a popular candidate does succeed against their will, the Government officials take good care to make his berth as uncomfortable as they can. These are small questions of politics to ask you to follow, but they were our great ones; and we were as ardent and excited and eager about the choice of our little local Governor as though he wielded real power in a great state.

"When I obtained the syndicate, my great ambition was to tread in the footsteps of my father, old Gustave Gamerra, who had left behind him a great name as the assertor of popular rights, and who had never bated the very least privilege that pertained to his native village. I did my best — not very discreetly, perhaps — for my own sake, but I held my head high against all imperial and royal officials, and I taught them to feel that there was at least one popular institution in the land that no exercise of tyranny could assail. I was over-zealous about all our rights. I raked up out of

old archives traces of privileges that we once possessed and had never formally surrendered; I discovered concessions that had been made to us of which we had never reaped the profit; and I was, so to say, ever at war with the authorities, who were frank enough to say that when my two years of office expired they meant to give me some wholesome lessons about obedience.

"They were as good as their word. I had no sooner descended to a private station than I was made to feel all the severities of their displeasure. They took away my license to sell salt and tobacco, and thereby fully one half of my little income; they tried to withdraw my privilege to sell wine, but this came from the municipality, and they could not touch it. Upon information that they had suborned, they twice visited my house to search for seditious papers, and, finally, they made me such a mark of their enmity that the timid of the townsfolk were afraid to be seen with me, and gradually dropped my acquaintance. This preyed upon me most of all. I was all my life of a social habit; I delighted to gather my friends around me, or to go and visit them, and to find myself, as I was growing old, growing friendless too, was a great blow.

"I was a widower, and had none but an only daughter."

When he had reached thus far, his voice failed him, and, after an effort or two, he could not continue, and turned away his head and buried it in his hands. Full ten minutes elapsed before he resumed, which he did with a hard, firm tone, as though resolved not to be conquered by his emotion.

"The cholera was dreadfully severe all through the Italian Tyrol; it swept from Venice to Milan, and never missed even the mountain villages, far away up the Alps. In our little hamlet we lost one hundred and eighteen souls, and my Gretchen was one of them.

"We had all grown to be very hard-hearted to each other; misfortune was at each man's door, and he had no heart to spare for a neighbor's grief; and yet such was the sorrow for her, that they came, in all this suffering and desolation, to try and comfort and keep me up, and though it was a time when all such cares were forgotten, the young people

went and laid fresh flowers over her grave every morning. Well, that was very kind of them, and made me weep heartily; and, in weeping, my heart softened, and I got to feel that God knew what was best for all of us, and that, mayhap, he had taken her away to spare her greater sorrow hereafter, and left me to learn that I should pray to go to her. She had only been in the earth eight days, and I was sitting alone in my solitary house, for I could not bear to open the shop, and began to think that I'd never have the courage to do so again, but would go away and try some other place and some other means of livelihood,—it was while thinking thus, a sharp, loud knock came to the door, and I arose rather angrily, to answer it.

“It was a sergeant of an infantry regiment, whose detachment was on march for Peschiera; there were troubles down there, and the Government had to send off three regiments in all haste from Vienna to suppress them. The sergeant was a Bohemian, and his regiment the Kinsky. He was a rough, coarse fellow, very full of his authority, despising all villagers, and holding Italians in especial contempt. He came to order me to prepare rations and room for six soldiers, who were to arrive that evening. I answered, boldly, that I would not. I had served the office of syndic in the town, and was thus forever exempt from the ‘billet,’ and I led him into my little sitting-room, and showed him my ‘brevet,’ framed and glazed, over the chimney. He laughed heartily at my little remonstrance, coolly turned the ‘brevet’ with its face to the wall, and said, —

“‘If you don't want twelve of us instead of six, you'll keep your tongue quiet, and give us a stoup of your best wine.’

“I did not wait to answer him, but seized my hat and hurried away to the Platz Commandant. He was an old enemy of mine, but I could not help it; his was the only authority I could appeal to, and he was bound to do me justice. When I reached the bureau, it was so crowded with soldiers and townsfolk, some seeking for billets, some insisting on their claim to be free, that I could not get past the door, and, after an hour's waiting, I was fain to give up the attempt, and turned back home again, deter-

mined to make my statement in writing, which, after all, might have been the most fitting.

"I found my doors wide open when I got there, and my shop crowded with soldiers, who, either seated on the counter or squatting on their knapsacks, had helped themselves freely to my wine, even to raising the top of an old cask, and drinking it in large cups from the barrel, which they handed liberally to their comrades as they passed.

"My heart was too full to care much for the loss, though the insult pressed me sorely, and, pushing my way through, I gained the inner room to find it crowded like the shop. All was in disorder and confusion. The old musket my father had carried for many a year, and which had hung over the chimney as an heirloom, lay smashed in fragments on the floor; some wanton fellow had run his bayonet through my 'brevet' as syndic, and hung it up in derision as a banner; and one — he was a corporal — had taken down the wreath of white roses that lay on Gretchen's coffin till it was laid in the earth, and placed it on his head. When I saw this, my senses left me; I gave a wild shriek, and dashed both my hands in his face. I tried to strangle him; I would have torn him with my teeth had they not dragged me off and dashed me on the ground, where they trampled on me, and beat me, and then carried me away to prison.

"I was four days in prison before I was brought up to be examined. I did not know whether it had been four or forty, for my senses had left me and I was mad; perhaps it was the cold dark cell and the silence restored me, but I came out calm and collected. - I remembered everything to the smallest incident.

"The soldiers were heard first; they agreed in everything, and their story had all the air of truth about it. They owned they had taken my wine, but said that the regiment was ready and willing to pay for it so soon as I came back, and that all the rest they had done were only the usual follies of troops on a march. I began by claiming my exemption as a syndic, but was stopped at once by being told that my claim had never been submitted to the authorities, and that in my outrage on the imperial force I had forfeited all consideration on that score. My offence was

easily proven. I did not deny it, and I was lectured for nigh an hour on the enormity of my crime, and then sentenced to pay a fine of a thousand zwanzigers to the Emperor, and to receive four-and-twenty blows with the stick. 'It should have been eight-and-forty but for my age,' he said.

"On the same stool where I sat to hear my sentence was a circus man, waiting the Platz Commandant's leave to give some representation in the village. I knew him from his dress, but had never spoken to him nor he to me; just, however, as the Commandant had delivered the words of my condemnation, he turned to look at me, — mayhap to see how I bore up under my misfortune. I saw his glance, and I did my best to sustain it. I wanted to bear myself manfully throughout, and not to let any one know my heart was broken, which I felt it was. The struggle was, perhaps, more than I was able for, and, while the tears gushed out and ran down my cheeks, I burst out laughing, and laughed away fit after fit, making the most terrible faces all the while; so outrageously droll were my convulsions, that every one around laughed too, and there was the whole court screaming madly with the same impulse, and unable to control it.

"'Take the fool away!' cried the Commandant, at last, 'and bring him to reason with a hazel rod.' And they carried me off, and I was flogged.

"It was about a week after I was down near Commachio. I don't know how I got there, but I was in rags, and had no money, and the circus people came past and saw me. 'There's the old fellow that nearly killed us with his droll face,' said the chief. 'I'll give you two zwanzigers a day, my man, if you'll only give us a few grins like that every evening. Is it a bargain?'

"I laughed. I could not keep now from laughing at everything, and the bargain was made, and I was a clown from that hour. They taught me a few easy tricks to help me in my trade, but it is my face that they care for, — none can see it unmoved."

He turned on me as he spoke with a fearful contortion of countenance, but, moved by his story, and full only of

what I had been listening to, I turned away and shed tears.

"Yes," said he, meditatively, "many a happy heart is kindled at the fire that is consuming another. As for myself, both joy and sorrow are dead within me. I am without hope, and, stranger still, without fear."

"But you are not without benevolence," said I, as I looked towards the sleeping girl.

"She was so like Gretchen," said he; and he bent down his head and sobbed bitterly.

I would have asked him some questions about her if I dared, but I felt so rebuked by the sorrow of the old man, that my curiosity seemed almost unfeeling.

"She came amongst us a mere child," said he, "and speedily attached herself to me. I contrived to learn enough of her dialect to understand and talk to her, and at last she began to regard me as a father, and even called me such. It was a long time before I could bear this. Every time I heard the word my grief would burst out afresh; but what won't time do? I have come to like it now."

"And is she good and gentle and affectionate?" asked I.

"She is far too good and true-hearted to be in such company as ours. Would that some rich person,—it should be a lady,—kind and gentle and compassionate, could see her and take her away from such associates, and this life of shame, ere it be too late! If I have a sorrow left me now, it is for her."

I was silent; for though the wish only seemed fair and natural enough on his part, I could not help thinking how improbable such an incident would prove.

"She would repay it all," said he. "If ever there was a nature rich in great gifts, it is hers. She can learn whatever she will, and for a word of kindness she would hold her hand in the fire for you. Hush!" whispered he, "she is stirring. What is it, darling?" said he, creeping close to her, as she lay, throwing her arms wildly open, but not removing the handkerchief from her face.

She muttered something hurriedly, and then burst into a laugh so joyous and so catching, it was impossible to refrain from joining in it.

She threw back the kerchief at once and started to her knees, gazing steadfastly, almost sternly, at me. I saw that the old man comprehended the inquiry of her glance, and as quickly whispered a few words in her ear. She listened till he had done, and then, springing towards me, she caught my hand and kissed it.

I suspect he must have rebuked the ardor of her movement, for she hung her head despondingly, and turned away from us both.

"Now for the road once more," said Vaterchen, "for if we stay much longer here, we shall have the forest flies, which are always worse towards evening."

It was not without great difficulty I could prevent his carrying my knapsack for me, and even the girl herself would gladly have borne some of my load. At last, however, we set forth, Tintefleck lightening the way with a merry canzonette that had the time of a quickstep.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A GENIUS FOR CARICATURE.

WHAT a pleasant little dinner we had that day! It was laid out in a little summer-house of the inn-garden. All overgrown with a fine old fig-tree, through whose leaves the summer wind played deliciously, while a tiny rivulet rippled close by, and served to cool our "Achten-thaler,"—an amount of luxury that made Tintefleck quite wild with laughter.

"Is it cold enough?" she asked archly, in her peasant dialect, each time the old man laid down his glass.

As I came gradually to pick up the occasional meaning of her words,—a process which her expressive pantomime greatly aided,—I was struck by the marvellous acuteness of a mind so totally without culture, and I could not help asking Vaterchen why he had never attempted to instruct her.

"What can I do?" said he, despondently; "there are no books in the only language she knows, and the only language she will condescend to speak. She can understand Italian, and I have read stories for her, and sonnets, too, out of Leopardi; but though she will listen in all eagerness till they are finished, no sooner over than she breaks out into some wild Calabrian song, and asks me is it not worth all the fine things I have been giving her, thrice told."

"Could you not teach her to write?"

"I tried that. I bought a slate, and I made a bargain with her that she should have a scarlet knot for her hair when she could ask me for it in written words. Well, all seemed to go on prosperously for a time; we had got through half the alphabet very successfully, till we came to the letter H. This made her laugh immediately, it was so

like a scaffold we had in the circus for certain exercises; and no sooner had I marked down the letter, than she snatched the pencil from me, and drew the figure of a man on each bar of the letter. From that hour forth, as though her wayward humor had been only imprisoned, she burst forth into every imaginable absurdity at our lessons. Every ridiculous event of our daily life she drew, and with a rapidity almost incredible. I was not very apt, as you may imagine, in acquiring the few accomplishments they thought to give me, and she caricatured me under all my difficulties."

"*Si, si,*" broke she in at this; for, with a wonderful acuteness, she could trace something of a speaker's meaning where every word was unknown to her. As she spoke, she arose, and fled down the garden at top speed.

"Why has she gone? Is she displeased at your telling me all these things about her?" asked I.

"Scarcely that; she loves to be noticed. Nothing really seems to pain her so much as when she is passed over unremarked. When such an event would occur in the circus, I have seen her sob through her sleep all the night after. I half suspect now she is piqued at the little notice you have bestowed upon her. All the better if it be so."

"But here she comes again."

With the same speed she now came back to us, holding her slate over her head, and showing that she rightly interpreted what the old man had said of her.

"Now for my turn!" said Vaterchen, with a smile. "She is never weary of drawing me in every absurd and impossible posture."

"What is it to be, Tintefleck?" asked he. "How am I to figure this time?"

She shook her head without replying, and, making a sign that she was not to be questioned or interrupted, she nestled down at the foot of the fig-tree, and began to draw.

The old man now drew near me, and proceeded to give me further details of her strange temper and ways. I could mark that throughout all he said a tone of intense anxiety and care prevailed, and that he felt her disposition was exactly that which exposed her to the greatest perils for her

future. There was a young artist who used to follow her through all the South Tyrol, affecting to be madly in love with her, but of whose sincerity and honor Vaterchen professed to have great misgivings. He gave her lessons in drawing, and, what was less to be liked, he made several studies of herself. "The artless way," said the old man, "she would come and repeat to me all his raptures about her, was at first a sort of comfort to me. I felt reassured by her confidence, and also by the little impression his praises seemed to make, but I saw later on that I was mistaken. She grew each day more covetous of these flatteries, and it was no longer laughingly, but in earnest seriousness, she would tell me that the 'Fornarina' in some gallery had not such eyes as hers, and that some great statue that all the world admired was far inferior to her in shape. If I had dared to rebuke her vanity, or to ridicule her pretensions, all my influence would have been gone forever. She would have left us, gone who knows whither, and been lost, so that I had nothing for it but to seem to credit all she said and yet hold the matter lightly, and I said beauty had no value except when associated with rank and station. If queens and princesses be handsome, they are more fitted to adorn this high estate, but for humble folk it is as great a mockery as these tinsel gems we wear in the circus.

" 'Max says not,' said she to me one evening, after one of my usual lectures. 'Max says, there are queens would give their coronets to have my hair; ay, or even one of the dimples in my cheek.'

" 'Max is a villain,' said I, before I could control my words.

" 'Max is a *vero signor*!' said she, haughtily, 'and not like one of us; and more, too, I'll go and tell him what you have called him.' She bounded away from me at this, and I saw her no more till nightfall.

" 'What has happened to you, poor child!' said I, as I saw her lying on the floor of her room, her forehead bleeding, and her dress all draggled and torn. She would not speak to me for a long while, but by much entreating and caressing I won upon her to tell me what had befallen her. She had gone to the top of the 'Glucksburg,' and

thrown herself down. It was a fearful height, and only was she saved by being caught by the brambles and tangled foliage of the cliff; and all this for 'one harsh word of mine,' she said. But I knew better; the struggle was deeper in her heart than she was aware of, and Max had gone suddenly away, and we saw no more of him."

"Did she grieve after him?"

"I scarcely can say she did. She fretted, but I think it was for her own loneliness, and the want of that daily flattery she had grown so fond of. She became overbearing, and even insolent, too, with all her equals, and though for many a day she had been the spoiled child of the troop, many began to weary of her waywardness. I don't know how all this might have turned out, when, just as suddenly, she changed and became everything that she used to be."

When the old man had got thus far, the girl arose, and, without saying a word, laid the slate before us. Vaterchen, not very quick-sighted, could not at once understand the picture, but I caught it at once, and laughed immoderately. She had taken the scene where I had presented Vaterchen and herself to the ladies at the tea-table, and with an intense humor, sketched all the varying emotions of the incident. The offended dignity of the old lady, the surprise and mortification of Miss Herbert, and my own unconscious pretension as I pointed to the "friends" who accompanied me, were drawn with the spirit of high caricature. Nor did she spare Vaterchen or herself; they were drawn, perhaps, with a more exaggerated satire than all the rest.

The old man no sooner comprehended the subject than he drew his hand across it, and turned to her with words of anger and reproach. I meant, of course, to interfere in her behalf, but it was needless; she fled, laughing, into the garden, and before many minutes were over, we heard her merry voice, with the tinkle of a guitar to assist it.

"There it is," said Vaterchen, moodily. "What are you to do with a temperament like that?"

That was a question I was in no wise prepared to answer. Tinteffleck's temperament seemed to be the very converse of my own. I was over eager to plan out everything in life; *she* appeared to be just as impulsively bent on risking all.

My head was always calculating eventualities; *hers*, it struck me, never worried itself about difficulties till in the midst of them. Now, Jean Paul tells us that when a man detects any exaggerated bias in his character, instead of endeavoring, by daily watching, to correct it, he will be far more successful if he ally himself with some one of a diametrically opposite humor. If he be rash, for instance, let him seek companionship with the sluggish. If his tendency bear to over-imagination, let him frequent the society of realists. Why, therefore, should not I and Tintefleck be mutually beneficial? Take the two different kinds of wood in a bow: one will supply resistance, the other flexibility. It was a pleasant notion, and I resolved to test it.

"Vaterchen," said I, "call me to-morrow, when you get ready for the road. I will keep you company as far as Constance."

"Ah, sir," said he, with a sigh, "you will be well weary of us before half the journey is over; but you shall be obeyed."

CHAPTER XXXII.

I RELIEVE MYSELF OF MY PURSE.

NEXT morning, just as day was breaking, we set out on foot on our road to Constance. There was a pinkish-gray streak of light on the horizon, sure sign of a fine day, and the bright stars twinkled still in the clear half-sombre sky, and all was calm and noiseless, — nothing to be heard but the tramp of our own feet on the hard causeway.

With the cowardly caution of one who feels the water with his foot before he springs in to swim, I was glad that I made my first experiences of companionship with these humble friends while it was yet dark and none could see us. The old leaven of snobbery was unsubdued in my heart, and, as I turned to look at poor Vaterchen and then at the tinsel finery of Catinka, I bethought me of the little consideration the world extends to such as these and their belongings. "Vagabonds all!" would say some rich banker, as he rolled by in his massive travelling-carriage, creaking with imperials and jingling with bells. "Vagabonds all!" would mutter the Jew pedler, as he looked down from the *banquette* of the diligence. How slight is the sympathy of the realist for the poor creature whose life-labor is to please! How prone to regard him as useless, or, even worse, forgetting the while how a wiser than he has made many things in this beautiful world of ours that they should merely minister to enjoyment, gladden the eye and ear, and make our pilgrimage less weary! Where would be the crimson jay, where the scarlet bustard, where the gorgeous peacock with the nosegay on his tail, where the rose and the honeysuckle and the purple foxglove mingling with the wild thorn in our hedgerows, if the universe were of *their* creation, and this great globe but one big workshop? You never

insist that the daisy and the daffodil should be pot-herbs; and why are there not to be wild flowers in humanity as well as in the fields? Is it not a great pride to you who live under a bell-glass, nurtured and cared for, and with your name attached to a cleft-stick at your side, — is it not a great pride to know that you are not like one of us poor dog-roses? Be satisfied, then, with that glory; we only ask to live! Shame on me for that “only”! As if there could be anything more delightful than life. Life, with all its capacities for love and friendship and heroism and self-devotion, for generous actions and noble aspirations! Life to feel life, to know that we are in a sphere specially constructed for the exercise of our senses and the play of our faculties, free to choose the road we would take, and with a glorious reward if our choice be the right one!

“‘Vagabonds!’ Yes,” thought I, “there was once on a time such a vagabond, and he strolled along from village to village, making of his flute a livelihood, — a poor performer, too, he tells us he was, but he could touch the hearts of these simple villagers with his tones as he could move the hearts of thousands more learned than they with his marvellous pathos; and this vagabond was called Oliver Goldsmith.” I have no words to say the ecstasy this thought gave me. Many a proud traveller doubtless swept past the poor wayfarer as he went, dusty and footsore, and who was, nevertheless, journeying onward to a great immortality; to be a name remembered with blessings by generations when the haughty man that scorned him was forgotten forever. “And so now,” thought I, “some splendid Russian or some Saxon Cresus will crash by and not be conscious that the thin and weary-looking youth, with the girl’s bundle on his stick and the red umbrella under his arm, that this is Potts! Ay, sir, you fancy that to be threadbare and footsore is to be vulgar-minded and ignoble, and you never so much as suspect that the heart inside that poor plaid waistcoat is throbbing with ambitions high as a Kaiser’s, and that the brain within that battered Jim Crow is the realm of thoughts profound as Bacon’s, and high-soaring as Milton’s.”

If I make my reader a sharer in these musings of mine, it

is because they occupied me for some miles of the way. Vaterchen was not talkative, and loved to smoke on uninterruptedly. I fancy that, in his way, he was as great a dreamer as myself. Catinka would have talked incessantly if any one had listened, or could understand her. As it was, she recited legends and sang songs for herself, as happy as ever a blackbird was to listen to his own melody; and though I paid no especial attention to her music, still the sounds floated through all my thoughts, bathing them with a soothing flood; just as the air we breathe is often loaded with a sweet and perfumed breath ere we know it. On the whole, we journeyed along very pleasantly; and what between the fresh morning air, the brisk exercise, and the novelty of the situation, I felt in a train of spirits that made me delighted with everything. "This, after all," thought I, "is more like the original plan I sketched out for myself. This is the true mode to see life and the world. The student of nature never begins his studies with the more complicated organizations; he sets out with what is simplest in structure, and least intricate in function; he begins with the extreme link of the chain; so, too, I start with the investigation of those whose lives of petty cares and small ambitions must render them easy of appreciation. This poor Mollusca Vaterchen, for instance, — to see is to know him; and the girl, how absurd to connect such a guileless child of nature as that with those stereotyped notions of feminine craft and subtlety!" I then went on to imagine some future biographer of mine engaged on this portion of my life, puzzled for materials, puzzled still more to catch the clew to my meaning in it. "At this time," will he say, "Potts, by one of those strange caprices which often were the mainspring of his actions, resolved to lead a gypsy life. His ardent love of nature, his heartfelt enjoyment of scenery, and, more than even these, a certain breadth and generosity of character, disposed him to sympathize with those who have few to pity and fewer to succor them. With these wild children of the roadside he lived for months, joyfully sharing the burdens they carried, and taking his part in their privations. It was here he first met Catinka." I stopped at this sentence, and I slowly repeated to myself, "It was here he first met Ca-

tinka!" "What will he have next to record?" thought I. "Is Potts now to claim sympathy as the victim of a passion that regarded not station, nor class, nor fortune; that depised the cold conventionalities of a selfish world, and asked only a heart for a heart? Is he to be remembered as the faithful believer in his own theory, — Love, above all? Are we to hear of him clasping rapturously to his bosom the poor forlorn girl?" So intensely were my feelings engaged in my speculations, that, at this critical pass, I threw my arms around Catinka's neck, and kissed her. A rebuke, not very cruel, not in the least angry or peevish, brought me quickly to myself; and as Vaterchen was fortunately in front and saw nothing of what passed, I speedily made my peace. I do not know how it happened, but in that same peace-making I had passed my arm round her waist, and there it remained, — an army of occupation after the treaty was signed, — and we went along, side by side, very amicably, very happily.

We are often told that a small competence — the just enough to live on — is the bane of all enterprise; that men thus placed are removed from the stimulus of necessity, and yet not lifted into the higher atmosphere of ambitions. Exactly in the same way do I believe that equality is the grave of love. The passion thrives on difficulty, and requires sacrifice. You must bid defiance to mankind in your choice, or you are a mere fortune-hunter. Show the world the blushing peasant-girl you have made your wife, and say, "Yes, I have had courage to do this." Or else strive for a princess, — a Russian princess. Better, far better, however, the humble-hearted child of nature and the fields, the simple, trusting, confiding girl, who, regarding her lover as a sort of demi-god, would, while she clung to him —

"You press me so hard!" murmured Catinka, half rebukingly, but with a sort of pouting expression that became her marvellously.

"I was thinking of something that interested me, dearest," said I; but I'm not sure that I made my meaning very clear to her, and yet there was a roguish look in her black eye that puzzled me greatly. I began to like her, or, if you prefer the phrase, to fall in love with her. I knew it — I felt it just the way that a man who has once had the ague never

mistakes when he is going to have a return of the fever. In the same way exactly, did I recognize all the premonitory symptoms, — the giddiness, the shivering, increased action of the heart — Halt, Potts! and reflect a bit; are you describing love, or a tertian?

How will the biographer conduct himself here? Whether will he have to say, "Potts resisted manfully this fatal attachment; had he yielded to the seductions of this early passion, it is more than probable we would never have seen him this, that, and t' other, nor would the world have been enriched with — Heaven knows what;" or shall he record, "Potts loved her, loved her as only such a nature as his ever loves! He felt keenly that, in a mere worldly point of view, he must sacrifice; but it was exactly in that love and that sacrifice was born the poet, the wondrous child of song, who has given us the most glorious lyrics of our language. He had the manliness to share his fortune with this poor girl. 'It was,' he tells us of himself, in one of those little touching passages in his diary, which place him immeasurably above the mock sentimentality of Jean Jacques, — 'it was on the road to Constance, of a bright and breezy summer morning, that I told her of my love. We were walking along, our arms around each other, as might two happy, guileless children. I was very young in what is called the world, but I had a boundless confidence in myself; my theory was, 'If I be strengthened by the deep devotion of one loving heart, I have no fears of failure.'" Beautiful words, and worthy of all memory! And then he goes on: 'I drew her gently over to a grassy bench on the roadside, and, taking my purse from my pocket, poured out before her its humble contents, in all something less than twenty sovereigns, but to her eyes a very Pactolus of wealth.'

"What if I were to try this experiment?" thought I; "what if I were, so to say, to anticipate my own biography?" The notion pleased me much. There was something novel in it, too. It was making the experiment in the *corpore vili* of accident, to see what might come of it.

"Come here, Catinka," said I, pointing to a moss-covered rock at the roadside, with a little well at its base, — "come here, and let me have a drink of this nice clear water."

She assented with a smile and a nod, detaching at the same time a little cup from the flask she wore at her side, in *vivandière* fashion. "And we'll fill my flask too," said she, showing that it was empty. With a sort of childish glee she now knelt beside the stream, and washed the cup. What is it, I wonder, that gives the charm to running water, and imparts a sort of glad feeling to its contemplation? Is it that its ceaseless flow suggests that "forever" which contrasts so powerfully with all short-lived pleasures? I cannot tell, but I was still musing over the difficulty, when, having twice offered me the cup without my noticing it, she at last raised it to my lips. And I drank, — oh, what a draught it was! so clear, so cold, so pure; and all the time my eyes were resting on hers, looking, as it were, into another well, the deepest and most unfathomable of all.

"Sit down here beside me on this stone, Catinka, and help me to count these pieces of money; they have got so mingled together that I scarcely know what is left me." She seemed delighted with the project, and sat down at once; and I, throwing myself at her feet, poured the contents of my purse into her lap.

"*Madonna mia!*" was all she could utter as she beheld the gold. Aladdin in the cave never felt a more overwhelming rapture than did she at sight of these immense riches. "But where did it come from?" cried she, wildly. "Have you got mines of gold and silver? Have you got gems, too, — rubies and pearls? Oh, say if there be pearls; I love them so? And are you really a great prince, the son of a king; and are you wandering the world this way to seek adventures, or in search, mayhap, of that lovely princess you are in love with?" With wildest impetuosity she asked these and a hundred other questions, for it was only now and then that I could trace her meaning, which expressive pantomime did much to explain.

I tried to convince her that what she deemed a treasure was a mere pittance, which a week or two would exhaust; that I was no prince, nor had I a kingly father; "and last of all," said I, "I am not in pursuit of a princess. But I'll tell you what I am in search of, Catinka, — one trusting,

faithful, loving heart; one that will so unite itself to mine as to have no joys or sorrows or cares but mine; one content to go wherever I go, live however I live, and no matter what my faults may be, or how meanly others think of me, will ever regard me with eyes of love and devotion."

I had held her hand while I uttered this, gazing up into her eyes with ecstasy, for I saw how their liquid depth appeared to move as though about to overflow, when at last she spoke, and said, —

"And there are no pearls!"

"Poor child!" thought I, "she cannot understand one word I have been saying. Listen to me, Catinka," said I, with a slow utterance. "Would you give me your heart for all this treasure?"

"*Si, si!*" cried she, eagerly.

"And love me always, — forever?"

"*Si,*" said she, again; but I fancied with less of energy than before.

"And when it was spent and gone, and nothing remaining of it, what would you do?"

"Send you to gather more, *mio caro*," said she, pressing my hand to her lips, as though in earnest of the blandishments she would bestow upon me.

Now, I cannot affect to say that all this was very reassuring. This poor simple child of the mountains showed a spirit as sordid and as calculating as though she were baptized in May Fair. It was a terrible shock to me to see this; a dire overthrow to a very fine edifice that I was just putting the roof on! "Would Kate Herbert have made me such a speech?" thought I. "Would she have declared herself so venal and so worldly? — and why not? May it not be, perhaps, simply that a mere question of good-breeding, the usages of a polite world, might have made all the difference, and that she would have felt what poor Catinka felt and owned to? If this were true, the advantages were all on the side of sincerity. With honesty as the basis, what may not one build up of character? Where there is candor there are at least no disappointments. This poor simple child, untutored in the wiles of a scheming world, where all is false, unreal, and deceptive,

has the courage to say that her heart can be bought. She is ready in her innocence, too, to sell it, just as the Indians sell a great territory for a few glass beads or bright buttons. And why should not I make the acquisition in the very spirit of a new settler? It was I discovered this lone island of the sea; it was I first landed on this unknown shore; why not claim a sovereignty so cheaply established?" I put the question arithmetically before me: Given, a young girl, totally new to life and its seductions, deeply impressed with the value of wealth, to find the measure of venality in a well-brought-up young lady, educated at Clapham, and finished at Boulogne-sur-Mer. I expressed it thus: $D - y = T + x$, or an unknown quantity.

"What strange marks are you drawing there?" cried she, as I made these figures on the slate.

"A caprice," said I, in some confusion.

"No," said she; "I know better. It was a charm. Tell truth, — it was a charm."

"A charm, dearest; but for what?"

"I know," said she, shaking her head and laughing, with a sort of wicked drollery.

"You know! Impossible, child."

"Yes," she said with great gravity, while she swept her hand, across the slate and erased all the figures. "Yes I know, and I'll not permit it."

"But what, in Heaven's name, is trotting through your head, Catinka? You have not the vaguest idea of what those signs meant."

"Yes," she said, even more solemnly than before. "I know it all. You mean to steal away my heart in spite of me, and you are going to do it with a charm."

"And what success shall I have, Catinka?"

"Oh, do not ask me," said she, in a tone of touching misery. "I feel it very sore here." And she pressed her hand to her side. "Ah me," sighed she, "if there were only pearls!"

The ecstasy her first few words gave me was terribly routed by this vile conclusion, and I started abruptly, and in an angry voice, said, "Let us go on; Vaterchen will fear we are lost."

"And all this gold; what shall I do with it?" cried she.

"What you will. Throw it into the well if you like," said I, angrily; for in good sooth I was out of temper with her and myself and all mankind.

"Nay," said she, mildly, "it is yours; but I will carry it for you if it weary you."

I might have felt rebuked by the submissive gentleness of her words; indeed, I know not how it was that they did not so move me, and I walked on in front of her, heedless of her entreaties that I should wait till she came up beside me.

When she did join me, she wanted to talk immensely. She had all manner of questions to ask about where my treasure came from; how often I went back there to replenish it; was I quite sure that it could never, never be exhausted, and such-like? But I was in no gracious mood for such inquiries, and, telling her that I wished to follow my own thoughts without interruption, I walked along in silence.

I cannot tell the weight I felt at my heart. I am not speaking figuratively. No; it was exactly as though a great mass of heavy metal filled my chest, forced out my ribs, and pressed down my diaphragm; and though I held my hands to my sides with all my force, the pressure still remained.

"What a bitter mockery it is," thought I, "if the only false thing in all the world should be the human heart! There are diamonds that will resist fire, gold that will stand the crucible; but the moment you come to man and his affections, all is hollow and illusory!"

Why do we give the name worldliness to traits of selfish advancement and sordid gain, when a young creature like this, estranged from all the commerce of mankind, who knows nothing of that bargain-and-barter system which we call civilization, reared and nurtured like a young fawn in her native woods, should, as though by a very instinct of corruption, have a heart as venal as any hackneyed beauty of three London seasons?

Let no man tell me now, that it is our vicious system

of female training, our false social organization, our spurious morality, laxity of family ties, and the rest of it. I am firmly persuaded that a young squaw of the Choctaws has as many anxieties about her *parti* as any belle of Belgravia, even though the settlements be only paid in sharks' teeth and human toupees.

And what an absurdity is our whole code on this subject! A man is actually expected to court, solicit, and even worship the object that he is after all called upon to pay for. You do not smirk at the salmon in your fishmonger's window, or ogle the lamb at your butcher's; you go in boldly and say, "How much the pound?" If you sighed outside for a week, you'd get it never the cheaper. Why not then make an honest market of what is so salable? What a saving of time to know that the splendid creature yonder, with the queenly air, can only be had at ten thousand a year, but that the spicy article with the black ringlets will go for two! Instead of all the heart-burnings and blank disappointments we see now, we should have a practical, contented generation; and in the same spirit that a man of moderate fortune turns away from the seductions of turtle and whitebait, while he orders home his mutton chop, he would avert his gaze from beauty, and fix his affections on the dumpy woman that can be "got a bargain."

Why did not the poet say, Venality, thy name is Woman? It would suit the prosody about as well, and the purpose better. The Turks are our masters in all this; they are centuries — whole centuries in advance of us. How I wish some Babbage would make a calculation of the hours, weeks, years, centuries of time, are lost in what is called love-making! Time, we are told, is money; and here, at once, is the fund to pay off our national debt. Take the "time that's lost in wooing" by a nation, say of twenty-eight or thirty millions, and at the cheapest rate of labor — take the prison rate if you like — and see if I be not right. Let the population who now heave sighs pound oyster-shells, let those who pick quarrels pick oakum, and we need no income-tax!

"I'll not sing any more," broke in Catinka. "I don't think you have been listening to me."

"Listening to you!" said I, contemptuously; "certainly

not. When I want a siren, I take a pit ticket and go to the opera; seven-and-sixpence is the price of Circe, and dear at the money." With this rude rebuff I waved her off, and walked along once more alone.

At a sudden bend in the road we found Vaterchen seated under a tree waiting for us, and evidently not a little uneasy at our long absence.

"What is this?" said he, angrily, to Catinka. "Why have you remained so long behind?"

"We sat down to rest at a well," said she, "and then he took out a great bag of money to count, and there was so much in it, so many pieces of bright gold, that one could not help turning them over and over, and gazing at them."

"And worshipping them too, girl!" cried he, indignantly, while he turned on me a look of sorrow and reproach. I returned his stare haughtily, and he arose and drew me to one side.

"Am I, then, once more mistaken in my judgment of men? Have *you*, too, duped me?" said he, in a voice that shook with agitation. "Was it for this you offered us the solace of your companionship? Was it for this you condescended to journey with us, and deigned to be our host and entertainer?"

The appeal came at an evil moment: a vile, contemptible scepticism was at work within me. The rasp and file of doubt were eating away at my heart, and I deemed "all men liars."

"And is it to me — Potts — you address such words as these, you consummate old humbug? What is there about me that denotes dupe or fool?"

The old man shook his head, and made a gesture to imply he had not understood me; and now I remembered that I had uttered this rude speech in English, and not in German. With the memory of this fact came also the consciousness of its cruel meaning. What if I should have wronged him? What if the poor old fellow be honest and upright? What if he be really striving to keep this girl in the path of virtue? I came close to him, and fixed my eyes steadfastly on his face. He looked at me fearlessly, as an honest man might look. He never tried to turn away, nor did he make the

slightest effort to evade me. He seemed to understand all the import of my scrutiny, for he said, at last, —

“Well, are you satisfied?”

“I am, Vaterchen,” said I, “fully satisfied. Let us be friends.” And I took his hand and shook it heartily.

“You think me honest?” asked he.

“I do think so.”

“And I am not more honest than she is. No,” said he, resolutely, “Tintefleck is true-hearted.”

“What of *me*?” cried she, coming up and leaning her arm on the old man’s shoulder, — “what of *me*?”

“I have said that you are honest, and would not deceive!”

“Not *you*, Vaterchen, — not *you*,” said she, kissing him. And then, as she turned away, she gave me a look so full of meaning, and so strange, withal, that if I were to speak for an hour I could not explain it. It seemed to mean sorrow and reproach and wounded pride, with a dash of pity, and above all and everything, defiance; ay, that was its chief character, and I believe I winced under it.

“Let us step out briskly,” said Vaterchen. “Constance is a good eleven miles off yet.”

“He looks tired already,” said she, with a glance at me.

“I? I’m as fresh as when I started,” said I. And I made an effort to appear brisk and lively, which only ended in making them laugh heartily.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MY ELOQUENCE BEFORE THE CONSTANCE MAGISTRATES.

RESPECTABLE reader, there is no use in asking you if you have ever been in the Hotel of the "Balance," at Constance. Of course you have not. It is neither recorded in the book of John, nor otherwise known to fame. It is an obscure hostel, only visited by the very humblest wayfarers, and such poor offshoots of wretchedness as are fain to sleep on a truckle-bed and sup meanly. Vaterchen, however, spoke of it in generous terms. There was a certain oniony soup he had tasted there years ago whose flavor had not yet left his memory. He had seen, besides, the most delicious *schweine fleisch* hanging down from the kitchen rafters, and it had been revealed to him in a dream that a solvent traveller might have rashers on demand.

Poor fellow! I had not the vaguest idea of the eloquence he possessed till he came to talk on these matters. From modest and distrustful, he grew assured and confident; his hesitation of speech was replaced by a fluent utterance and a rich vocabulary; and he repeatedly declared that though the exterior was unprepossessing, and the surface generally homely, there were substantial comforts obtainable which far surpassed the resources of more pretentious houses. "You are served on pewter, it is true," said he; "but pewter is a rare material to impart relish to a savory mess." Though we should dine in the kitchen, he gave me to understand that even in this there were advantages, and that the polite guest of the *salon* never knew what it was to taste that rich odor of the "roast," or that fragrant incense that steamed up from the luscious stew, and which were to cookery what bouquet was to wine.

"I will not say that, honored sir," continued he, "to you, in the mixed company which frequent such humble hearths there would be matter of interest and amusement; but, to a man like myself, these chance companionships are delightful. Here all are stragglers, all adventurers. Not a man that deposits his pack in the corner and draws in his chair to the circle but is a wanderer and a pilgrim of one sort or other." He drew me an amusing picture of one of these groups, wherein, even without telling his story, each gave such insight into his life and travels as to present a sort of drama.

Whether it was that my companion had drawn too freely on his imagination, or that we had fallen on an unfortunate moment, I cannot say; but, though we found the company at the "Balance" numerous and varied, there was none of the sociality I looked for, still less of that generous warmth and good greeting which he assured me was the courtesy of such places. The men were chiefly carriers, with their mule-teams and heavy wagons, bound for the Bavarian Tyrol. There was a sprinkling of Jew pedlars, on their way to the Vorarlberg; a deserter from the Austrian army, trying to get back to Hesse Cassel; and an Italian image carrier, with a green parrot and a well-filled purse, going back to finish his days at Lucca.

Now none of these were elements of a very exalted or exclusive rank; they were each and all of them taken from the very base of the social pyramid; and yet, would it be believed that they regarded our entrance amongst them as an act of rare impudence!

A more polished company might have been satisfied with averted heads or cold looks; these were less equivocal. One called out to the landlord to know if he expected any gypsies; another, affecting to treat us as solicitors for their patronage, said he had no "batzen" to bestow on buffoonery; a third suggested we should get up our theatricals under the cart-shed outside, and beat the drum when we were ready; and the deserter, a poor weak-looking, mangy wretch with a ragged fatigue-jacket and broken boots, put his arm round Catinka's waist, to draw her on his knee, for the which she dealt him such a slap on the

face as fairly sent him on the floor, in which ignoble position Vaterchen kicked him again and again. In an instant all were upon us. Carters, pedlers, and image men assailed us furiously. I suppose I beat somebody; I know that several beat *me*. The impression left upon me when all was over was of a sort of human kaleidoscope, where the people turned every way without ceasing. Now we seemed all on our feet, now on our heads, now on the floor, now in the air, Vaterchen flying about like a demon, while Tintefleck stood in a corner, with a gleaming stiletto in hand, saying something in Calabrian, which sounded like an invitation to come and be killed.

The police came at last; and, after a noisy scene of accusation and denial, the weight of evidence went against us, and we were marched off to prison, poor old Vaterchen crying like a child, for all the disgrace and misery he had brought on his benefactor: and while he kissed my hand, swearing that a whole life's devotion would not be enough to recompense me for what he had been the means of inflicting on me, Catinka took it more easily, her chief regret apparently being, that nobody came near enough to give her a chance with her knife, which she assured us she wielded with a notable skill, and could, with a jerk, send flying through a door, like a javelin, at full six paces' distance; nor, indeed, was it without considerable persuasion she could be induced to restore it to its sheath, which truth obliges me to own was inside her garter. Our prison, an old tower adjoining the lake, had been once the dungeon of John Huss, and the torture chamber, as it was still called, continued to be used for mild transgressors, such as we were. A small bribe induced the jailer's wife to take poor Tintefleck for the night into her own quarters, and Vaterchen and I were sole possessors of the gloomy old hall, which opened by a balcony, railed like a sort of cage, over the lake.

If the torture chamber had been denuded of its flesh pin-cers and thumb-screws, and the other ingenious devices of human cruelty, I am bound to own that its traditions as a place of suffering had not died out, as the fleas left nothing to be desired on the score of misery. Whether it was that

they had been pinched by a long fast, or that we were more tender, cutaneously, than the aborigines, I know not, but I can safely aver that I never passed such a night, and sincerely trust that I may never pass such another. Though the air from the lake was cold and chilly, we preferred to crouch on the balcony to remaining within the walls; but even here our persecutors followed us.

Vaterchen slept through it all; an occasional convulsive jerk would show, at times, when one of the enemy had chanced upon some nervous fibre; but, on the whole, he bore up like one used to such martyrdom, and able to brave it. As for me, when morning broke, I looked like a strong case of confluent smallpox, with the addition that my heavy eyelids nearly closed over my eyes, and my lips swelled out like a Kaffir's. How that young minx, Catinka, laughed at me. All the old man's signs, warnings, menaces, were in vain; she screamed aloud with laughter, and never ceased, even as we were led into the tribunal and before the dread presence of the judge.

The judgment-seat was not imposing. It was a long, low, ill-lighted chamber, with a sort of raised counter at one end, behind which sat three elderly men, dressed like master sweeps, — that is, of the old days of climbing-boys. The prisoners were confined in a thing like a fold, and there leaned against one end of the same pen as ourselves, a square-built, thick-set man of about eight-and-forty, or fifty, dressed in a suit of coarse drab, and whom, notwithstanding an immense red beard and moustache, a clear blue eye and broad brow proclaimed to be English. He was being interrogated as we entered, but from his total ignorance of German the examination was not proceeding very glibly.

"You're an Englishman, ain't you?" cried he, as I came in. "You can speak High Dutch, perhaps?"

"I can speak German well enough to be intelligible, sir."

"All right," said he, in the same free-and-easy tone. "Will you explain to those old beggars there that they're making fools of themselves. Here's how it is. My passport was made out for two; for Thomas Harpar, that's me, and Sam Rigges. Now, because Sam Rigges ain't here,

they tell me I can't be suffered to proceed. Ain't that stupid? Did you ever hear the like of that for downright absurdity before?"

"But where is he?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you, because you're a countryman; but I don't like blackening an Englishman to one of those confounded foreigners. Rigges has run."

"What do you mean by 'run'?"

"I mean, cut his stick; gone clean away; and what's worse, too, carried off a stout bag of dollars with him that we had for our journey."

"Whither were you going?"

"That's neither here nor there, and don't concern you in any respect. What you've to do is, explain to the old cove yonder, — the fellow in the middle is the worst of them, — tell him it's all right, that I'm Harpar, and that the other ain't here; or, look here, I'll tell you what's better, do you be Rigges, and it's all right."

I demurred flatly to this suggestion, but undertook to plead his cause on its true merits.

"And who are you, sir, that presume to play the advocate here?" said the judge, haughtily. "I fancied that you stood there to answer a charge against yourself."

"That matter may be very easily disposed of, sir," said I, as proudly; "and you will be very fortunate if you succeed as readily in explaining your own illegal arrest of me to the higher court of your country."

With the eloquence which we are told essentially belongs to truth, I narrated how I had witnessed, as a mere passing traveller, the outrageous insult offered to these poor wanderers as they entered the inn. With the warm enthusiasm of one inspired by a good cause, I painted the whole incident with really scarcely a touch of embellishment, reserving the only decorative portion to a description of myself, whom I mentioned as an agent of the British government, especially employed on a peculiar service, the confirmation of which I proudly established by my passport setting forth that I was a certain "Ponto, Chargé des Dépêches."

Now if there be one feature of continental life fixed and immutable, it is this: that wherever the German language

be spoken, the reverence for a government functionary is supreme. If you can only show on documentary evidence that you are grandson of the man who made the broom that swept out a government office, it is enough. You are from that hour regarded as one of the younger children of Bureaucracy. You are under the protection of the state, and though you be but the smallest rivet in the machinery, there is no saying what mischief might not ensue if you were either lost or mislaid.

I saw in an instant the dread impression I had created, and I said, in a voice of careless insolence, "Go on, I beg of you; send me back to prison; chain me; perhaps you would like to torture me? The government I represent is especially slow in vindicating the rights of its injured officials. It has a European reputation for long-suffering, patience, and forbearance. Yes, Englishmen can be impaled, burned, flayed alive, disembowelled. By all means, avail yourselves of your bland privileges; have me led out instantly to the scaffold, unless you prefer to have me broken on the wheel!"

"Will nobody stop him!" cried the president, almost choking with wrath.

"Stop me; I suspect not, sir. It is upon these declarations of mine, made thus openly, that my country will found that demand for reparation which will one day cost you so dearly. Lead on, I am ready for the block." And as I said this, I untied my cravat, and appeared to prepare for the headsman.

"If he will not cease, the court shall be dissolved," called out the judge.

"Never, sir. Never, so long as I live, shall I surrender the glorious privileges of that freedom by which I assert my birthright as a Briton."

"Well, you are as impudent a chap as ever I listened to," muttered my countryman at my side.

"The prisoners are dismissed, the court is adjourned," said the president, rising; and amidst a very disorderly crowd, not certainly enthusiastic in our favor, we were all hurried into the street.

"Come along down here," said Mr. Harpar. "I'm in a

very tidy sort of place they call the 'Golden Pig.' Come along, and bring the vagabonds, and let's have breakfast together."

I was hurt at the speech; but as my companions could not understand its coarseness, I accepted the invitation, and we followed him.

"Well, I ain't seen *your* like for many a day," said Harpar, as we went along. "If you'd have said the half of that to one of our 'Beaks,' I think I know where you'd be. But you seem to understand the fellows well. Mayhap you have lived much abroad?"

"A great deal. I am a sort of citizen of the world," said I, with a jaunty easiness.

"For a citizen of the world you appear to have strange tastes in your companionship. How did you come to for-gather with these creatures?"

I tried the timeworn cant about seeing life in all its gradations, — exploring the cabin as well as visiting the palace, and so on; but there was a rugged sort of incredulity in his manner that checked me, and I could not muster the glib rudeness which usually stood by me on such occasions.

"You're not a man of fortune," said he, dryly, as I finished; "one sees that plainly enough. You're a fellow that should be earning his bread somehow; and the question is, — Is this the kind of life that you ought to be leading? What humbug it is to talk about knowing the world and such-like. The thing is, to know a trade, to understand some art, to be able to produce something, to manufacture something, to convert something to a useful purpose. When you've done that, the knowledge of men will come later on, never be afraid of that. It's a school that we never miss one single day of our lives. But here we are; this is the 'Pig.' Now, what will you have for breakfast? Ask the vagabonds, too, and tell them there's a wide choice here; they have everything you can mention in this little inn."

An excellent breakfast was soon spread out before us, and though my humble companions did it the most ample justice, I sat there, thoughtful and almost sad. The words

of that stranger rang in my ears like a reproach and a warning. I knew how truly he had said that I was not a man of fortune, and it grieved me sorely to think how easily he saw it. In my heart of hearts I knew it was the delusion I loved best. To appear to the world at large an eccentric man of good means, free to do what he liked and go where he would, was the highest enjoyment I had ever prepared for myself; and yet here was a coarse, commonplace sort of man, — at least, his manners were unpolished and his tone underbred, — and he saw through it all at once.

I took the first opportunity to slip away unobserved from the company, and retired to the little garden of the inn, to commune with myself and be alone. But ere I had been many minutes there, Harpar joined me. He came up smoking his cigar, with the lounging, lazy air of a man at perfect leisure, and, consequently, quite free to be as disagreeable as he pleased.

"You went off without eating your breakfast," said he, bluntly. "I saw how it was. You did n't like *my* freedom with you. You fancied that I ought to have taken all that nonsense of yours about your rank and your way of life for gospel; or, at least, that I ought to have pretended to do so. That ain't my way. I hate humbug."

It was not very easy to reply good humoredly to such a speech as this. Indeed, I saw no particular reason to treat this man's freedom with any indulgence, and drawing myself haughtily up, I prepared a very dry but caustic rejoinder.

"When I have learned two points," said I, "on which you can inform me, I may be better able to answer what you have said. The first is: By what possible right do you take to task a person that you never met in your life till now? and, secondly, What benefit on earth could it be to me to impose upon a man from whom I neither want nor expect anything?"

"Easily met, both," said he, quickly. "I'm a practical sort of fellow, who never wastes time on useless materials; that's for your first proposition. Number two: you're a dreamer, and you hate being awakened."

"Well, sir," said I, stiffly, "to a gentleman so remarkable

for perspicuity, and who reads character at sight, ordinary intercourse must be wearisome. Will you excuse me if I take my leave of you here?"

"Of course, make no ceremony about it; go or stay, just as you like. I never cross any man's humor."

I muttered something that sounded like a dissent to that doctrine, and he quickly added, "I mean, further than speaking my mind, that's all; nothing more. If you had been a man of fair means, and for a frolic thought it might be good fun to consort for a few days with rascallions of a travelling circus, all one could say was, it was n't very good taste; but being, evidently, a fellow of another stamp, a young man who ought to be in his father's shop or his uncle's counting-house, following some honest craft or calling, — for *you*, I say, it was downright ruin."

"Indeed!" said I, with an accent of intense scorn.

"Yes," continued he, seriously, "downright ruin. There's a poison in the lazy, good-for-nothing life of these devils, that never leaves a man's blood. I've a notion that it would n't hurt a man's nature so much were he to consort with housebreakers; there's, at least, something real about these fellows."

"You talk, doubtless, with knowledge, sir," said I, glad to say something that might offend him.

"I do," said he, seriously, and not taking the smallest account of the impertinent allusion. "I know that if a man has n't a fixed calling, but is always turning his hand to this, that, and t' other, he will very soon cease to have any character whatsoever; he'll just become as shifty in his nature as in his business. I've seen scores of fellows wrecked on that rock, and I had n't looked at you twice till I saw you were one of them."

"I must say, sir," said I, summoning to my aid what I felt to be a most cutting sarcasm of manner, — "I must say, sir, that, considering how short has been the acquaintance which has subsisted between us, it would be extremely difficult for me to show how gratefully I feel the interest you have taken in me."

"Well, I'm not so sure of that," said he, thoughtfully.

"May I ask, then, how?"

"Are you sure, first of all, that you wish to show this gratitude you speak of?"

"Oh, sir, can you possibly doubt it?"

"I don't want to doubt it, I want to profit by it."

I made a bland bow that might mean anything, but did not speak.

"Here's the way of it," said he, boldly. "Rigges has run off with all my loose cash, and though there's money waiting for me at certain places, I shall find it very difficult to reach them. I have come down here on foot from Wildbad, and I can make my way in the same fashion, to Marseilles or Genoa; but then comes the difficulty, and I shall need about ten pounds to get to Malta. Could you lend me ten pounds?"

"Really, sir," said I, coolly, "I am amazed at the innocence with which you can make such a demand on the man whom you have, only a few minutes back, so acutely depicted as an adventurer."

"It was for that very reason I thought of applying to you. Had you been a young fellow of a certain fortune, you'd naturally have been a stranger to the accidents which now and then leave men penniless in out-of-the-way places, and it is just as likely that the first thought in your head would be, 'Oh, he's a swindler. Why has n't he his letters of credit or his circular notes?' But, being exactly what I take you for, the chances are, you'll say: 'What has befallen *him* to-day may chance to *me* to-morrow. Who can tell the day and the hour some mishap may not overtake him?' and so I'll just help him through it."

"And that was your calculation?"

"That was my calculation."

"How sorry I feel to wound the marvellous gift you seem to possess of interpreting character. I am really shocked to think that for this time, at least, your acuteness is at fault."

"Which means that you'll not do it."

I smiled a benign assent.

He looked at me for a minute or more with a sort of blank incredulity, and then, crossing his arms on his breast, moved slowly down the walk without speaking.

I cannot say how I detested this man; he had offended me in the very sorest part of all my nature; he had wounded the nicest susceptibility I possessed; of the pleasant fancies wherewith I loved to clothe myself he would not leave me enough to cover my nakedness; and yet, now that I had resented his cool impertinence, I hated myself far more than I hated him. Dignity and sarcasm, forsooth! What a fine opportunity to display them, truly! The man might be rude and underbred; he *was* rude and underbred! and was that any justification for *my* conduct towards him? Why had I not had the candor to say, "Here 's all I possess in the world; you see yourself that I cannot lend you ten pounds." How I wished I had said that, and how I wished, even more ardently still, that I had never met him, never interchanged speech with him!

"And why is it that I am offended with him, — simply because he has discovered that I am Potts?" Now, these reflections were all the more bitter, since it was only twenty-four hours before that I had resolved to throw off delusion either of myself or others; that I would take my place in the ranks, and fight out my battle of life a mere soldier. For this it was that I made companionship with Vaterchen, walking the high road with that poor old man of motley, and actually speculating — in a sort of artistic way — whether I should not make love to Tintefleck! And if I were sincere in all this, how should I feel wounded by the honest candor of that plain-spoken fellow. He wanted a favor at my hands, he owned this; and yet, instead of approaching me with flattery, he at once assails the very stronghold of my self-esteem, and says, "No humbug, Potts; at least none with *me*!" He opens acquaintance with me on that masonic principle by which the brotherhood of Poverty is maintained throughout all lands and all peoples, and whose great maxim is, "He who lends to the poor man borrows from the ragged man."

"I'll go after him at once," said I, aloud. "I'll have more talk with him. I'm much mistaken if there 's not good stuff in that rugged nature."

When I entered the little inn, I found Vaterchen fast asleep; he had finished off every flask on the table, and lay

breathing stertorously, and giving a long-drawn whistle in his snore, that smacked almost of apoplexy. Tinteffleck was singing to her guitar before a select audience of the inn servants, and Harpar was gone!

I gave the girl a glance of rebuke and displeasure. I aroused the old man with a kick, and imperiously demanded my bill.

"The bill has been paid by the other stranger," said the landlord; "he has settled everything, and left a *trinkgeld* for the servants, so that you have nothing to pay."

I could have almost cried with spite as I heard these words. It would have been a rare solace to my feelings if I could have put that man down for a rogue, and then been able to say to myself, how cleverly I had escaped the snares of a swindler. But to know now that he was not only honest but liberal, and to think, besides, that I had been his guest, — eaten of his salt, — it was more than I well could endure.

"Which way did he take?" asked I.

"Round the head of the lake for Lindau. I told him that the steamer would take him there to-morrow for a trifle, but he would not wait."

"Ah me!" sighed Vaterchen, but half awake, and with one eye still closed, "and we are going to St. Gallen."

"Who said so?" cried I, imperiously. "We are going to Lindau; at least, if I be the person who gives orders here. Follow!" And as I spoke I marched proudly on, while a slip-shod, shuffling noise of feet, and a low, half-smothered sob told me that they were coming after me.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A SUMPTUOUS DINNER AND AN EMPTY POCKET.

My poor companions had but a sorry time of it on that morning. I was in a fearful temper, and made no effort to control it. The little romance of my meeting with these creatures was beginning to scale off, and, there beneath, lay the vulgar metal of their natures exposed to view. As for old Vaterchen, shuffling along in his tattered shoes, half-stupid with wine and shame together, I could n't bear to look at him; while Tintefleck, although at the outset abashed by my rebukeful tone and cold manner, had now rallied, and seemed well disposed to assert her own against all comers. Yes, there was a palpable air of defiance about her, even to the way that she sang as she went along; every thrill and cadence seemed to say, "I'm doing this to amuse myself; never imagine that I care whether you are pleased or not." Indeed, she left me no means of avoiding this conclusion, since at every time that I turned on her a look of anger or displeasure, her reply was to sing the louder.

"And it was only yesterday," thought I, "and I dreamed that I could be in love with this creature, — dreamed that I could replace Kate Herbert's image in my heart with that coarse travesty of woman's gentleness. Why, I might as well hope to make a gentleman of old Vaterchen, and present him to the world as a man of station and eminence."

What an insane hope was this! As well might I shiver a fragment from a stone on the road-side, and think to give it value by having it set as a ring. The caprice of keeping them company for a day might be pardonable. It was the whim of one who is, above all, a student of mankind. But why continue the companionship? A little more of such intimacy, and who is to say what I may not imbibe of their

habits and their natures; and Potts, the man of sentiment, the child of impulse, romance, and poetry, become a slave of the "Ring," a saltimbanque! Now, though I could implicitly rely upon the rigidity of my joints to prevent the possibility of my ever displaying any feats of agility, I could yet picture myself in a long-tailed blue coat and jack-boots walking round and round in the sawdust circle, with four or five other creatures of the same sort, and who have no consciousness of any function till they are made the butt of some extempore drollery by the clown.

The creative temperament has this great disadvantage, that one cannot always build castles, but must occasionally construct hovels, and sometimes even dungeons and jails; and here was I now, with a large contract order for this species of edifice, and certainly I set to work with a will. The impatience of my mind communicated itself to my gait, and I walked along at a tremendous rate.

"I can scarcely keep up with you at this pace," said Tintefleck; "and see, we have left poor Vaterchen a long way behind."

I made some rude answer, — I know not what, — and told her to come on.

"I will not leave him," said she, coming to a halt, and standing in a composed and firm attitude before me.

"Then I will," said I, angrily. "Farewell!" And waving my hand in a careless adieu, I walked briskly onward, not even turning a look on her as I went. I think, I'm almost certain, I heard a heavy sob close behind me, but I would not look round for worlds. I was in one of those moods — all weak men know them well — when a harsh or an ungracious act appears something very daring and courageous. The very pain my conduct gave myself, persuaded me that it must be heroic, just as a devotee is satisfied after a severe self-castigation.

"Yes, Potts," said I, "you are doing the right thing here. A little more of such association as this, and you would be little better than themselves. Besides, and above all, you ought to be 'real.' Now, these are not real any more than the tinsel gems and tinfoil splendors they wear on their tunics." It broke on me, too, like a sudden light, that

to be the fictitious Potts, the many-sided, many-tinted, — what a German would call “*der mitviele-farben bedeckte Potts*,” — I ought to be immensely rich, all my changes of character requiring great resources and unlimited “properties” as stage folk call them; whereas, “*der echte wahrhaftige Mann Potts*” might be as poor as Lazarus. Indeed, the poorer the more real, since more natural.

While I thus speculated, I caught sight of a man scaling one of the precipitous paths by which the winding road was shortened for foot-travellers; a second glance showed me that this was Harpar, who, with a heavy knapsack, was toiling along. I made a great effort to come up with him, but when I reached the high road, he was still a long distance in front of me. I could not, if there had been any one to question me, say why I wished to overtake him. It was a sort of chase suggested simply by the object in front; a rare type, if we but knew it, of one half the pursuits we follow throughout life.

As I mounted the last of these bypaths which led to the crest of the mountain, I felt certain that, with a lighter equipment, I should come up with him; but scarcely had I gained the top, than I saw him striding away vigorously on the road fully a mile away beneath me. “He shall not beat me,” said I; and I increased my speed. It was all in vain. I could not do it; and when I drew nigh Lindau at last, very weary and footsore, the sun was just sinking on the western shore of the lake.

“Which is the best inn here?” asked I of a shopkeeper who was lounging carelessly at his door.

“Yonder,” said he, “where you see that post-carriage turning into.”

“To-night,” said I, “I will be guilty of an extravagance. I will treat myself to a good supper, and an honest glass of wine.” And on these hospitable thoughts intent I unslung my knapsack, and, throwing as much of distinction as I could into my manner, strolled into the public room.

So busied was the household in attending to the travellers who arrived “extra post,” that none condescended to notice me, till at last, as the tumult subsided, a venerable old waiter approached me, and said, in a half friendly, half rebukeful

tone, "It is at the 'Swan' you ought to be, my friend; the next turning but two to the left hand, and you'll see the blue lantern over the gateway."

"I mean to remain where I am," said I, imperiously, "and to remember your impertinence when I am about to pay my bill. Bring me the *carte*."

I was overjoyed to see the confusion and shame of the old fellow. He saw at once the grievous error he had committed, and was so overwhelmed that he could not reply. Meanwhile, with all the painstaking accuracy of a practised *gourmand*, I was making a careful note of what I wished for supper.

"Are you not ashamed," said I, rebukefully, "to have *ortolans* here, when you know in your heart they are swallows?"

He was so abject that he could only give a melancholy smile, as though to say, "Be merciful, and spare us!"

"Bohemian pheasant, too, — come, come, this is too bad! Be frank and confess; how often has that one speckled tail done duty on a capon of your own raising?"

"Gracious Herr!" muttered he, "do not crush us altogether."

I don't think that he said this in actual words, but his terrified eyes and his shaking cheeks declared it.

"Never mind," said I, encouragingly, "it will not hurt us to make a sparing meal occasionally; with the venison and steak, the fried salmon, the duck with olives, and the apricot tart, we will satisfy appetite, and persuade ourselves, if we can, that we have fared luxuriously."

"And the wine, sir?" asked he.

"Ah, there we *are* difficult. No little Baden vintage, no small wine of the Bergstrasse, can impose upon us! Liebfrauen-milch, or, if you can guarantee it, Marcobrunner will do; but, mind, no substitutes!"

He laid his hand over his heart and bowed low; and, as he moved away, I said to myself, "What a mesmerism there must be in real money, since, even with the mockery of it, I have made that creature a bond slave." Brief as was the interval in preparing my meal, it was enough to allow me a very considerable share of reflection, and I

found that, do what I would, a certain voice within would whisper, "Where are your fine resolutions now, Potts? Is this the life of reality that you had promised yourself? Are you not at the old work again? Are you not masquerading it once more? Don't you know well enough that all this pretension of yours is bad money, and that at the first ring of it on the counter you will be found out?"

"This you may rely on, gracious sir," said the waiter, as he laid a bottle on the table beside me with a careful hand. "It is the orange seal;" and he then added, in a whisper, "taken from the Margrave's cellar in the revolution of '93, and every flask of it worth a province."

"We shall see — we shall see," said I, haughtily; "serve the soup!"

If I had been Belshazzar, I believe I should have eaten very heartily, and drunk my wine with a great relish, notwithstanding that drawn sword. I don't know how it is, but if I can only see the smallest bit of *terra firma* between myself and the edge of a precipice, I feel as though I had a whole vast prairie to range over. For the life of me I cannot realize anything that may, or may not, befall me remotely. "Blue are the hills far off," says the adage; and on the converse of the maxim do I aver, that faint are all dangers that are distant. An immediate peril overwhelms me; but I could look forward to a shipwreck this day fortnight with a fortitude truly heroic.

"This is a nice old half-forgotten sort of place," thought I, "a kind of vulgar Venice, water-washed, and muddy, and dreary, and do-nothing. I'll stay here for a week or so; I'll give myself up to the drowsy *genius loci*; I'll Germanize to the top of my bent; who is to say what metaphysical melancholy, dashed with a strange diabolic humor, may not come of constantly feeding on this heavy cookery, and eternally listening to their gurgling gutturals? I may come out a Wieland or a Herder, with a sprinkling of Henri Heine! Yes," said I, "this is the true way to approach life; first of all develop your own faculties, and then mark how in their exercise you influence your fellow-men. Above all, however, cultivate your individuality, respect this the greatest of all the unities."

"*Ja, gnädiger Herr,*" said the old waiter, as he tried to step away from my grasp, for, without knowing it, I had laid hold of him by the wrist while I addressed to him this speech. Desirous to re-establish my character for sanity, somewhat compromised by this incident, I said:

"Have you a money-changer in these parts? If so, let me have some silver for this English gold." I put my hand in my pocket for my purse; not finding it, I tried another and another. I ransacked them all over again, patted myself, shook my coat, looked into my hat, and then, with a sudden flash of memory, I bethought me that I had left it with Catinka, and was actually without one sou in the world! I sat down, pale and almost fainting, and my arms fell powerless at my sides.

"I have lost my purse!" gasped I out, at length.

"Indeed!" said the old man, but with a tone of such palpable scorn that it actually sickened me.

"Yes," said I, with all that force which is the peculiar prerogative of truth; "and in it all the money I possessed."

"I have no doubt of it," rejoined he, in the same dry tone as before.

"You have no doubt of what, old man? Or what do you mean by the supercilious quietness with which you assent to my misfortune? Send the landlord to me."

"I will do more! I will send the police," said he, as he shuffled out of the room.

I have met scores of men on my way through life who would not have felt the slightest embarrassment in such a situation as mine, fellows so accustomed to shipwreck, that the cry of "Breakers ahead!" or "Man the boats," would have occasioned neither excitement nor trepidation. What stuff they are made of instead of nerves, muscles, and arteries, I cannot imagine, since, when the question is self-preservation, how can it possibly be more imminent than when not alone your animal existence is jeopardized, but the dearer and more precious life of fame and character is in peril?

For a moment I thought that though this besotted old fool of a waiter might suspect my probity the more clear-sighted intelligence of the landlord would at once recog-

nize my honest nature, and with the confidence of a noble conviction say, "Don't tell me that the man yonder is a knave. I read him very differently. Tell me your story, sir." And then I would tell it. It is not improbable that my speculation might have been verified had it not been that it was a landlady and not a landlord who swayed the destinies of the inn. Oh, what a wise invention of our ancestors was the Salique law! How justly they appreciated the unbridled rashness of the female nature in command! How well they understood the one-idea'd impetuosity with which they rush to wrong conclusions!

Until I listened to the Frau von Wintner, I imagined the German language somewhat weak in the matter of epithets. She undeceived me on this head, showing resources of abusive import that would have done credit to a Homeric hero. Having given me full ten minutes of a strong vocabulary, she then turned on the waiter, scornfully asking him if, at his time of life, he ought to have let himself be imposed upon by so palpable and undeniable a swindler as myself? She clearly showed that there was no extenuation of his fault, that rogue and vagabond had been written on my face, and inscribed in my manner; not to mention that I had followed the well-beaten track of all my fraternity in fraud, and ordered everything the most costly the house could command. In fact, so strenuously did she urge this point, and so eager did she seem about enforcing a belief in her statement, that I almost began to suspect she might suggest an anatomical examination of me to sustain her case. Had she been even less eloquent, the audience would still have been with her, for it is a curious but unquestionable fact that in all little visited localities the stranger is ungraciously regarded and ill looked on.

Whenever I attempted to interpose a word in my defence, I was overborne at once. Indeed, public opinion was so decidedly against me, that I felt very happy in thinking Lynch law was not a Teutonic institution. The room was now filled with retainers of the inn, strangers, town-folk, and police, and, to judge by the violence of their gestures and the loud tones of their voices, one would have pronounced me a criminal of the worst sort.

"But what is it that he has done? What's his offence?" I heard a voice say from the crowd, and I fancied his accent was that of a foreigner. A perfect inundation of vituperative accusation, however, now poured in, and I could gather no more. The turmoil and uproar rose and fell, and fell and rose again, till at last, my patience utterly exhausted, I burst out into a very violent attack on the uncivilized habits of a people who could thus conduct themselves to a man totally unconvicted of any offence.

"Well, well, don't give way to passion; don't let temper get the better of you," said a fat, citizen-like man beside me. "The stranger there has just paid for what you have had, and all is settled."

I thought I should have fainted as I heard these words. Indeed, until that instant, I had never brought home to my own mind the utter destitution of my state; but now, there I stood, realizing to myself the condition of one of those we read of in our newspapers as having received five shillings from the poor-box, while D 490 is deputed to "make inquiries after him at his lodgings," and learn particulars of his life and habits. I could have borne being sent to prison. I could have endured any amount of severity, so long as I revolted against its injustice; but the sense of being an object of actual charity crushed me utterly, and I could nearly have cried with vexation.

By degrees the crowd thinned off, and I found myself sitting alone beside the table where I had dined, with the hateful old waiter, as though standing sentinel over me.

"Who is this person," asked I, haughtily, "who, with an indelicate generosity, has presumed to interfere with the concerns of a stranger?"

"The gracious nobleman who paid for your dinner is now eating his own at No. 8," said the old monster with a grin.

"I will call upon him when he has dined," said I, transfixing the wretch with a look so stern, as to make rejoinder impossible; and then, throwing my plaid wrapper and my knapsack on a table near, I strolled out into the street.

Lindau is a picturesque old place, as it stands rising, as it were, out of the very waters of the Lake of Constance,

and the great mountain of the Sentis, with its peak of six thousand feet high, is a fine object in the distance; while the gorge of the Upper Rhine offers many a grand effect of Alpine scenery, not the less striking when looked at with a setting sun, which made the foreground more massive and the hill tops golden; and yet I carried that in my heart which made the whole picture as dark and dreary as Poussin's Deluge. It was all very beautiful. There, was the snow-white summit, reflected in the still water of the lake; there, the rich wood, browned with autumn, and now tinted with a golden glory, richer again; there were the white-sailed boats, asleep on the calm surface, streaked with the variegated light of the clouds above, and it was peaceful as it was picturesque. But do what I could, I could not enjoy it, and all because I had lost my purse, just as if certain fragments of a yellow metal the more or the less, ought to obscure eyesight, lull the sense of hearing, and make a man's whole existence miserable. "And after all," thought I, "Catinka will be here this evening, or to-morrow at furthest. Vaterchen was tired, and could not come on. It was *I* who left *them*; I, in my impatience and ill-humor. The old man doubtless knew nothing of the purse confided to the girl, nor is it at all needful that he should. They will certainly follow me, and why, for the mere inconvenience of an hour or two, should I persist in seeing the whole world so crape-covered and sad-looking? Surely this is not the philosophy my knowledge of life has taught me. I ought to know and feel that these daily accidents are but stones on the road one travels. They may, perchance, wound the foot or damage the shoe, but they rarely delay the journey, if the traveller be not faint-hearted and craven. I will treat the whole incident in a higher spirit. I will wait for their coming in that tranquil and assured condition of mind which is the ripe fruit of a real insight into mankind. Pitt said, after long years of experience, that there was more of good than of bad in human nature. Let it be the remark of some future biographer that Potts agreed with him."

When I got back to the inn, I was somewhat puzzled what to do. It would have been impossible with any success

to have resumed my former tone of command, and for the life of me I could not bring myself down to anything like entreaty. While I thus stood, uncertain how to act, the old waiter approached me, almost courteously, and said my room was ready for me when I wished it.

"I will first of all wait upon the traveller in No. 8," said I.

"He has retired for the night," was the answer. "He seems in very delicate health, and the fatigue of the journey has overcome him."

"To-morrow will do, then," said I easily; and not venturing upon an inquiry as to the means by which my room was at my disposal, I took my candle and mounted the stairs.

As I lay down in my bed, I resolved I would take a calm survey of my past life: what I had done, what I had failed to do, what were the guiding principles which directed me, and whither they were likely to bear me. But scarcely had I administered to myself the preliminary oath to tell nothing but the truth, than I fell off sound asleep.

My first waking thought the next morning was to inquire if two persons had arrived in search of me — an elderly man and a young woman. I described them. None such had been seen. "They will have sought shelter in some of the humbler inns," thought I; "I'll up and look after them." I searched the town from end to end; I visited the meanest halting-places of the wayfarer; I inquired at the police bureaus — at the gate — but none had arrived who bore any resemblance to those I asked after. I was vexed — only vexed at first — but gradually I found myself growing distrustful. The suspicion that the ice is not strong enough for your weight, and then, close upon that, the shock of fear that strikes you when the loud crash of a fracture breaks on the ear, are mere symbols of what one suffers at the first glimmering of a betrayal. I repelled the thought with indignation; but certain thoughts there are which, when turned out, stand like sturdy duns at the gate, and will not be sent away. This was one of them. It followed me wherever I went, importunately begging for a hearing, and menacing

me with sad consequences if I were obdurate enough to listen. "You are a simpleton, Potts, a weak, foolish, erring creature! and you select as the objects of your confidence those whose lives of accident present exactly as the most irresistible of all temptations to them — the Dupe! How they must have laughed — how they must yet be laughing at you! How that old drunken fox will chuckle over your simplicity, and the minx Tintefleck indulge herself in caricatures of your figure and face! I wonder how much of truth there was in that old fellow's story? Was he ever the syndic of his village, or was the whole narrative a mere fiction like — like —" I covered my face with my hands in shame as I muttered out, "like one of your own, Potts?"

I was very miserable, for I could no longer stand proudly forward as the prosecutor, but was obliged to steal ignominiously into the dock and take my place beside the other prisoners. What became of all my honest indignation as I bethought me, that I, of all men, could never arraign the counterfeit and the sham?

"Let them go, then," cried I, "and prosper if they can; I will never pursue them. I will even try and remember what pleased and interested me in their fortunes, and, if it may be, forget that they have carried away my little all of wealth."

A loud tramping of post-horses, and the cracking of whips, drew me to the window, and I saw beneath in the court-yard, a handsome travelling britschka getting ready for the road. Oh, how suggestive is a well cushioned calèche, with its many appliances of ease and luxury, its trim imperials, its scattered litter of wrappers and guide-books, — all little episodes of those who are to journey in it!

"Who are the happy souls about to travel thus enjoyably?" thought I, as I saw the waiter and the courier discussing the most convenient spot to deposit a small hamper with eatables for the road; and then I heard the landlady's voice call out:

"Take up the bill to No. 8."

So, then, this was No. 8 who was fast getting ready to depart, — No. 8 who had interposed in my favor the evening

before, and towards whom a night's rest and some reflection had modified my feelings and changed my sentiments very remarkably.

"Will you ask the gentleman at No. 8 if I may be permitted to speak with him?" said I to the man who took in the bill.

"He'll scarcely see you now, — he's just going off."

"Give the message as I speak it," said I; and he disappeared.

There was a long interval before he issued forth again, and when he did so he was flurried and excited. Some overcharges had been taken off and some bad money in change to be replaced by honest coin, and it was evident that various little well-intended rogueries had not achieved their usual success.

"Go in, you'll find him there," said the waiter, insolently, as he went down to have the bill rectified.

I knocked, a full round voice cried, "Come in!" and I entered.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MARY CROFTON'S COMMISSION.

"WELL, what next? Have you bethought you of anything more to charge me with?" cried a large full man, whose angry look and manner showed how he resented these cheatings.

I staggered back sick and faint, for the individual before me was Crofton, my kind host of long ago in Ireland, and from whose hospitable roof I had taken such an uncere- monious departure.

"Who are you?" cried he, again. "I had hoped to have paid everything and everybody. Who are you?"

Wishing to retire unrecognized, I stammered out something very unintelligibly indeed about my gratitude, and my hope for a pleasant journey to him, retreating all the while towards the door.

"It's all very well to wish the traveller a pleasant journey," said he, "but you innkeepers ought to bear in mind that no man's journey is rendered more agreeable by roguery. This house is somewhat dearer than the 'Clarendon' in London, or the 'Hôtel du Rhin' at Paris. Now, there might be, perhaps, some pretext to make a man pay smartly who travels post, and has two or three servants with him, but what excuse can you make for charging some poor devil of a foot traveller, taking his humble meal in the common room, and, naturally enough, of the commonest fare, for making him pay eight florins — eight florins and some kreutzers — for his dinner? Why, our dinner here for two people was handsomely paid at six florins a head, and yet you bring in a bill of eight florins against that poor wretch."

I saw now that, what between the blinding effects of his indignation, and certain changes which time and the road had worked in my appearance, it was more than probable I should escape undetected, and so I affected to busy myself with some articles of his luggage that lay scattered about the room until I could manage to slip away.

"Touch nothing, my good fellow!" cried he, angrily; "send my own people here for these things. Let my courier come here — or my valet!"

This was too good an opportunity to be thrown away, and I made at once for the door; but at the same instant it was opened, and Mary Crofton stood before me. One glance showed me that I was discovered; and there I stood, speechless with shame and confusion. Rallying, however, after a moment, I whispered, "Don't betray me," and tried to pass out. Instead of minding my entreaty, she set her back to the door, and laughingly cried out to her brother, —

"Don't you know whom we have got here?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed he.

"Cannot you recognize an old friend, notwithstanding all his efforts to cut us?"

"Why — what — surely it can't be — it's not possible — eh?" And by this time he had wheeled me round to the strong light of the window, and then, with a loud burst, he cried out, "Potts, by all that's ragged! Potts himself! Why, old fellow, what could you mean by wanting to escape us?" and he wrung my hand with a cordial shake that at once brought the blood back to my heart, while his sister completed my happiness by saying, —

"If you only knew all the schemes we have planned to catch you, you would certainly not have tried to avoid us."

I made an effort to say something, — anything, in short, — but not a word would come. If I was overjoyed at the warmth of their greeting, I was no less overwhelmed with shame; and there I stood, looking very pitifully from one to the other, and almost wishing that I might faint outright and so finish my misery.

With a woman's fine tact, Mary Crofton seemed to read the meaning of my suffering, and, whispering one word in her brother's ear, she slipped away and left us alone together

"Come," said he, good-naturedly, as he drew his arm inside of mine, and led me up and down the room, "tell me all about it. How have you come here? What are you doing?"

I have not the faintest recollection of what I said. I know that I endeavored to take up my story from the day I had last seen him, but it must have proved a very strange and bungling narrative, from the questions which he was forced occasionally to put, in order to follow me out.

"Well," said he, at last, "I will own to you that, after your abrupt departure, I was sorely puzzled what to make of you, and I might have remained longer in the same state of doubt, when a chance visit that I made to Dublin led me to Dycer's, and there, by a mere accident, I heard of you, — heard who you were, and where your father lived. I went at once and called upon him, my object being to learn if he had any tidings of you, and where you then were. I found him no better informed than myself. He showed me a few lines you had written on the morning you had left home, stating that you would probably be absent some days, and might be even weeks, but that since that date nothing had been heard of you. He seemed vexed and displeased, but not uneasy or apprehensive about your absence, and the same tone I observed in your college tutor, Dr. Tobin. He said, 'Potts will come back, sir, one of these days, and not a whit wiser than he went. His self-esteem is to his capacity in the reduplicate ratio of the inverse proportion of his ability, and he will be always a fool.' I wrote to various friends of ours travelling about the world, but none had met with you; and at last, when about to come abroad myself, I called again on your father, and found him just re-married."

"Re-married!"

"Yes! he was lonely, he said, and wanted companionship, and so on; and all I could obtain from him was a note for a hundred pounds, and a promise that, if you came back within the year, you should share the business of his shop with him."

"Never! never!" said I. "Potts may be the fool they deem him, but there are instincts and promptings in his

secret heart that they know nothing of. I will never go back. Go on."

"I now come to my own story. I left Ireland a day or two after and came to England, where business detained me some weeks. My uncle had died and left me his heir, — not, indeed, so rich as I had expected, but very well off for a man who had passed his life on very moderate means. There were a few legacies to be paid, and one which he especially intrusted to me by a secret paper, in the hope that, by delicate and judicious management, I might be able to persuade the person in whose interest it was bequeathed to accept. It was, indeed, a task of no common difficulty, the legatee being the widow of a man who had, by my uncle's cruelty, been driven to destroy himself. It is a long story, which I cannot now enter upon; enough that I say it had been a trial of strength between two very vindictive unyielding men which should crush the other, and my uncle, being the richer, — and not from any other reason, — conquered.

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"The victory was a very barren one. It imbittered every hour of his life after, and the only reparation in his power, he attempted on his death-bed, which was to settle an annuity on the family of the man he had ruined. I found out at once where they lived, and set about effecting this delicate charge. I will not linger over my failure; but it was complete. The family was in actual distress, but nothing would induce them to listen to the project of assistance; and, in fact, their indignation compelled me to retire from the attempt in despair. My sister did her utmost in the cause, but equally in vain, and we prepared to leave the place, much depressed and cast down by our failure. It was on the last evening of our stay at the inn of the little village, a townsman of the place, whom I had employed to aid my attempt by his personal influence with the family, asked to see me and speak with me in private.

"He appeared to labor under considerable agitation, and opened our interview by bespeaking my secrecy as to what he was about to communicate. It was to this purport: A friend of his own, engaged in the Baltic trade, had just declared to him that he had seen W., the person I allude to,

alive and well, walking on the quay at Riga, that he traced him to his lodging; but, on inquiring for him the next day, he was not to be found, and it was then ascertained that he had left the city. W. was, it would seem, a man easily recognized, and the other declared that there could not be the slightest doubt of his identity. The question was a grave one how to act, since the assurance company with which his life was insured were actually engaged in discussing the propriety of some compromise by paying to the family a moiety of the policy, and a variety of points arose out of this contingency; for while it would have been a great cruelty to have conveyed hopes to the family that might by possibility not be realized, yet, on the other hand, to have induced them to adopt a course on the hypothesis of his death when they believed him still living, was almost as bad.

"I thought for a long while over the matter, and with my sister's counsel to aid me, I determined that we should come abroad and seek out this man, trusting that, if we found him, we could induce him to accept of the legacy which his family rejected. We obtained every clew we could think of to his detection. A perfect description of him, in voice, look, and manner; a copy of his portrait, and a specimen of his handwriting; and then we bethought ourselves of interesting you in the search. You were rambling about the world in that idle and desultory way in which any sort of a pursuit might be a boon, — as often in the by-paths as on the high-roads; you might chance to hit off this discovery in some remote spot, or, at all events, find some clew to it. In a word, we grew to believe that, with you to aid us, we should get to the bottom of this mystery; and now that by a lucky chance we have met you, our hopes are all the stronger."

"You'll think it strange," said I, "but I already know something of this story; the man you allude to was Sir Samuel Whalley."

"How on earth have you guessed that?"

"I came by the knowledge on a railroad journey, where my fellow-passengers talked over the event, and I subsequently travelled with Sir Samuel's daughter, who came

abroad to fill the station of a companion to an elderly lady. She called herself Miss Herbert."

"Exactly! The widow resumed her family name after W.'s suicide, — if it were a suicide."

"How singular to think that you should have chanced upon this link of the chain! And do you know her?"

"Intimately; we were fellow-travellers for some days."

"And where is she now?"

"She is, at this moment, at a villa on the Lake of Como, living with a Mrs. Keats, the sister of her Majesty's Envoy at Kalbratonsstadt."

"You are marvellously accurate in this narrative, Potts," said he, laughing; "the impression made on you by this young lady can scarcely have been a transient one."

I suppose I grew very red, — I felt that I was much confused by this remark, — and I turned away to conceal my emotion. Crofton was too delicate to take any advantage of my distress, and merely added, —

"From having known her, you will naturally devote yourself with more ardor to serve her. May we then count upon your assistance in our project?"

"That you may," said I. "From this hour I devote myself to it."

Crofton at once proposed that I should order my luggage to be placed on his carriage, and start off with them; but I firmly opposed this plan. First of all, I had no luggage, and had no fancy to confess as much; secondly, I resolved to give at least one day for Vaterchen's arrival, — I'd have given a month rather than come down to the dreary thought of his being a knave, and Tinteffek a cheat! In fact, I felt that if I were to begin any new project in life with so slack an experience, that every step I took would be marked with distrust, and tarnished with suspicion. I therefore pretended to Crofton that I had given rendezvous to a friend at Lindau, and could not leave without waiting for him. I am not very sure that he believed me, but he was most careful in not dropping a word that might show incredulity; and once more we addressed ourselves to the grand project before us.

"Come in, Mary!" cried he, suddenly rising from his

chair, and going to meet her. "Come in, and help us by your good counsel."

It was not possible to receive me with more kindness than she showed. Had I been some old friend who came to meet them there by appointment, her manner could not have been more courteous nor more easy; and when she learned from her brother how warmly I had associated myself in this plan, she gave me one of her pleasantest smiles, and said, —

"I was not mistaken in you."

With a great map of Europe before us on the table, we proceeded to plan a future line of operations. We agreed to take certain places, each of us, and to meet at certain others, to compare notes and report progress. We scarcely permitted ourselves to feel any great confidence of success, but we all concurred in the notion that some lucky hazard might do for us more than all our best-devised schemes could accomplish; and, at last, it was settled that, while *they* took Southern Germany and the Tyrol, *I* should ramble about through Savoy and Upper Italy, and our meeting-place be in Italy. The great railway centres, where Englishmen of every class and gradation were much employed, offered the best prospect of meeting with the object of our search, and these were precisely the sort of places such a man would be certain to resort to.

Our discussion lasted so long that the Croftons put off their journey till the following day, and we dined all together very happily, never wearied of talking over the plan before us, and each speculating as to what share of acuteness he could contribute to the common stock of investigation. It was when Crofton left the room to search for the portrait of Whalley, that Mary sat down at my side, and said, —

"I have been thinking for some time over a project in which you can aid me greatly. My brother tells me that you are known to Miss Herbert. Now I want to write to her; I want to tell her that there is one who, belonging to a family from which hers has suffered heavily, desires to expiate so far, maybe, the great wrong, and, if she will permit it, to be her friend. While I can in a letter explain what I feel on this score, I am well aware how much aid it

would afford me to have the personal corroboration of one who could say, 'She who writes this is not altogether unworthy of your affection; do not reject the offer she makes you, or, at least, reflect and think over it before you refuse it.' Will you help me so far?"

My heart bounded with delight as I first listened to her plan; it was only a moment before that I remembered how difficult, if not impossible, it would be for me to approach Miss Herbert once more. How or in what character could I seek her? To appear before her in any feigned part would be, under the circumstances, ignoble and unworthy, and yet was I, out of any merely personal consideration, any regard for the poor creature Potts, to forego the interests, mayhap the whole happiness, of one so immeasurably better and worthier? Would not any amount of shame and exposure to myself be a cheap price for even a small quantity of benefit bestowed on *her*? What signified it that I was poor and ragged — unknown, unrecognized — if *she* were to be the gainer? Would not, in fact, the very sacrifice of self in the affair be ennobling and elevating to me, and would I not stand better in my own esteem for this one honest act, than I had ever done after any mock success or imaginary victory?

"I think I can guess why you hesitate," cried she; "you fear that I will say something indiscreet, — something that would compromise you with Miss Herbert, — but you need not dread that; and, at all events, you shall read my letter."

"Far from it," said I; "my hesitation had a very different source. I was solely thinking whether, if you were aware of how I stood in my relations to Miss Herbert, you would have selected me as your advocate; and though it may pain me to make a full confession, you shall hear everything."

With this I told her all, — all, from my first hour of meeting her at the railway station, to my last parting with her at Schaffhausen. I tried to make my narrative as grave and commonplace as might be, but, do what I would, the figure in which I was forced to present myself, overcame all her attempts at seriousness, and she laughed immoderately. If it had not been for this burst of merriment on

her part, it is more than probable I might have brought down my history to the very moment of telling, and narrated every detail of my journey with Vaterchen and Tintefleck. I was, however, warned by these circumstances, and concluded in time to save myself from this new ridicule.

"From all that you have told me here," said she, "I only see one thing, — which is, that you are deeply in love with this young lady."

"No," said I; "I was so once, I am not so any longer. My passion has fallen into the chronic stage, and I feel myself her friend, — only her friend."

"Well, for the purpose I have in mind, this is all the better. I want you, as I said, to place my letter in her hands, and, so far as possible, enforce its arguments, — that is, try and persuade her that to reject our offers on her behalf is to throw upon us a share of the great wrong our uncle worked, and make us, as it were, participators in the evil he did them. As for myself," said she, boldly, "all the happiness that I might have derived from ample means is dashed with remembering what misery it has been attended with to that poor family. If you urge that one theme forcibly, you can scarcely fail with her."

"And what are your intentions with regard to her?" asked I.

"They will take any shape she pleases. My brother would either enable her to return home, and, by persuading her mother to accept an annuity, live happily under her own roof; or she might, if the spirit of independence fires her, — she might yet use her influence over her mother and sister to regard our proposals more favorably; or she might come and live with us, and this I would prefer to all; but you must read my letter, and more than once too. You must possess yourself of all its details, and, if there be anything to which you object, there will be time enough still to change it."

"Here he is, — here is the portrait of our lost sheep," said Crofton, now entering with a miniature in his hand. It represented a bluff, bold, almost insolently bold man in full civic robes, the face not improbably catching an additional expression of vulgar pride from the fact that the likeness

was taken in that culminating hour of greatness when he first took the chair as chief magistrate of his town.

"Not an over-pleasant sort of fellow to deal with, I should say," remarked Crofton. "There are some stern lines here about the corners of the eyes, and certain very suspicious-looking indentations next the mouth."

"His eye has no forgiveness in it," said his sister.

"Well, one thing is clear enough, he ought to be easily recognized; that broad forehead, and those wide-spread nostrils and deeply divided chin, are very striking marks to guide one. I cannot give you this," said Crofton to me, "but I'll take care to send you an accurate copy of it at the first favorable moment; meanwhile, make yourself master of its details, and try if you cannot carry the resemblance in your memory."

"Disabuse yourself, too," said she, laughing, "of all this accessorial grandeur, and bear in mind that you'll not find him dressed in ermine, or surrounded with a collar and badge. Not very like his daughter, I'm sure," whispered she in my ear, as I continued to gaze steadfastly at the portrait. "Can you trace any likeness?"

"Not the very faintest; she is beautiful," said I, "and her whole expression is gentleness and delicacy."

"Well, certainly," said Crofton, shutting up the miniature, "these are not the distinguishing traits of our friend here, whom I should call a hard-natured, stern, obstinate fellow, with great self-reliance, and no great trust of others."

"I was just thinking," said I, "that were I to come up with such a man as this, what chance would my poor, frail, yielding temperament have, in influencing the rugged granite of his nature? He'd terrify me at once."

"Not when your object was a good and generous one," said Miss Crofton. "You might well enough be afraid to confront such a man as this if your aim was to overreach and deceive him; but bear in mind the fable of the man who had the courage to take the thorn out of the lion's paw. The operation, we are told, was a painful one, and there might have been an instant in which the patient felt disposed to eat his doctor; but, with all these perils, strong

in a good purpose, the surgeon persevered, and by his skill and his courage made the king of the beasts his fast friend for life. The lesson is worth remembering."

I was still pondering over this apophthegm, when Crofton aroused me by pushing across the table a great heap of gold. "This is all yours, Potts," said he; "and remember that as you are now my agent, travelling for the house of Crofton and Co., that you journey at my cost."

Of course I would not listen to this proposal, and, although urged by Miss Crofton with all a woman's tact and delicacy, I persisted so firmly in my refusal, that they were obliged to yield. I now had a hundred pounds all my own; and though the sum be not a very splendid one, I remember some French writer — I'm not sure it is not Jules Janin — saying, "Any man who can put his hand into his pocket and find five Napoleons there, is rich;" and he certainly supports his theory with considerable sophistry and cleverness, mainly depending on the assumption that any of the reasonable daily necessities of life, even in a luxurious point of view, are attainable with such means. Now, although a hundred pounds would not very long supply resources for such a life, yet, as I am not a Frenchman, nor living in Paris, still less had I habits or tastes of a costly kind, I might very well eke out three months pleasantly on this sum, and in these three months what might not happen? In a "hundred days" the great Napoleon crushed the whole might of the Austrian empire, and secured an emperor's daughter for his bride; and in another "hundred days" he made the tour of France, from Cannes to Rochefort, and lost an empire by the way! Wonderful things might then be compassed within three months.

"What are you saying about three months, Potts?" asked Crofton, for unwittingly I had uttered these words aloud.

"I was observing," said I, "that in three months from this day, we should arrange to meet somewhere. Where shall we say?"

"Geneva is very central; shall we name Geneva?"

"Oh, on no account. Let our rendezvous be in Italy. Let us say Rome."

"Rome be it, then," cried Crofton. "Now for another point: let us have a wager as to who first discovers the object of our search. I'll bet you twenty Napoleons, Potts, to ten, — for as we are two to one, so should the wager be."

"I take you," cried I, entering into his humor, "and I feel as certain of success as if I had your money in my hands."

"Will you have another wager with *me*?" whispered Mary Crofton, as she came behind my chair. "It is, that you'll not persuade Miss Herbert to wear this ring for *my* sake."

"I'll bet my life on it," said I, taking the opal ring she drew from her finger, as she spoke; "I'm in that mood of confidence now, I feel there is nothing I could not promise."

"If so, then, Potts, let me have the benefit of this fortunate interval, and ask you to promise me one thing, which is, not to change your mind more than twice a day; don't be angry with me, but hear me out. You are a good-hearted fellow, and have excellent intentions; I don't think I know one less really selfish, but, at the same time, you are so fickle of purpose, so undecided in action, that I'd not be the least astonished to hear, when we asked for you to-morrow at breakfast time, that you had started for a tour in Norway, or on a voyage to the Southern Pacific."

"And is this your judgment of me also, Miss Crofton?" said I, rising from my seat.

"Oh, no, Mr. Potts. I would only suspect you of going off into the Tyrol, or the Styrian Alps, and forgetting all about us, amidst the glaciers and the cataracts."

"I wish you a good-night, and a better opinion of your humble servant," said I, bowing.

"Don't go, Potts — wait a minute — come back. I have something to tell you."

I closed the door behind me, and hastened off, not, however, perfectly clear whether I was the injured man, or one who had just achieved a great outrage.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FURTHER INTERCOURSE WITH HARPAE.

I AM obliged to acknowledge that I was vainglorious enough to accept a seat in the Crofton carriage on the morning of their departure, and accompany them for a mile or so of the way, — even at the price of returning on foot, — just that I might show myself to the landlady and that odious old waiter in a position of eminence, and make them do a bitter penance for the insults they had heaped on an illustrious stranger. It was a poor and paltry triumph, and over very contemptible adversaries, but I could not refuse it to myself. Crofton, too, contributed largely to the success of my little scheme, by insisting that I should take the place beside his sister, while he sat with his back to the horses; and though I refused at first, I acceded at last, with the bland compliance of a man who feels himself once more in his accustomed station.

As throughout this true history I have candidly revealed the inmost traits of my nature — well knowing the while how deteriorating such innate anatomy must prove — I have ever felt that he who has small claims to interest by the events of his life, can make some compensation to the world by an honest exposure of his motives, his weaknesses, and his struggles. Now, my present confession is made in this spirit, and is not absolutely without its moral, for, as the adage tells us, "Look after the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves;" so would I say, Guard yourself carefully against petty vices. You and I, most esteemed reader, are — I trust fervently — little likely to be arraigned on a capital charge. I hope sincerely that transportable felonies, and even misdemeanors, may not picture among the accidents of our life; such-like are the pounds that take

care of themselves, but the "small pence," which require looking after, are little envies and jealousies and rancors, petty snobberies of display, small exhibitions of our being better than this man or greater than that; these, I repeat to you, accumulate on a man's nature just the way barnacles fasten on a ship's bottom, — from mere time, and it is wonderful what damage can come of such paltry obstacles.

I very much doubt if a Roman conqueror regarded the chained captive who followed his chariot with a more supreme pride than I bestowed upon that miserable old waiter who now bowed himself to the ground before me, and when I ordered my dinner for four o'clock, and said that probably I might have a friend to dine with me, his humiliation was complete.

"I wish I knew the secret of your staying here," said Mary Crofton, as we drove along; "why will you not tell it?"

"Perhaps it might prove indiscreet, Mary; our friend Potts may have become a *mauvais sujet* since we have seen him last?"

I wrapped myself in a mysterious silence, and only smiled.

"Lindau, of all places, to stop at!" resumed she, pettishly. "There is nothing remarkable in the scenery, no art treasures, nothing socially agreeable; what can it possibly be that detains you in such a place?"

"My dear Mary," said Crofton, "you are, without knowing it, violating a hallowed principle; you are no less than leading into temptation. Look at poor Potts there, and you will see that, while he knows in his inmost heart the secret which detains him here is some passing and insignificant circumstance unworthy of mention, you have, by imparting to it a certain importance, suggested to his mind the necessity of a story; give him now but five minutes to collect himself, and I'll engage that he will 'come out' with a romantic incident that would never have seen the light but for a woman's curiosity."

"Good heavens!" thought I, "can this be a true interpretation of my character? Am I the weak and impressionable creature this would bespeak me?" I must have

blushed deeply at my own reflection, for Crofton quickly added, —

“Don't get angry with me, Potts, any more than you would with a friend who'd say, ‘Take care how you pass over that bridge, I know it is rotten and must give way.’”

“Let me answer you,” said I, courageously, for I was acutely hurt to be thus arraigned before another. “It is more than likely that you, with your active habits and stirring notions of life, would lean very heavily on him who, neither wanting riches nor honors, would adopt some simple sort of dreamy existence, and think that the green alleys of the beech wood, or the little path beside the river, pleasanter sauntering than the gilded antechamber of a palace; and just as likely is it that you would take him roundly to task about wasted opportunities, misapplied talents, and stigmatize as inglorious indolence what might as possibly be called a contented humility. Now, I would ask you, why should one man be the measure of another? The load you could carry with ease might serve to crush me, and yet there may be some light burdens that would suit *my* strength, and in bearing which I might taste a sense of duty grateful as your own.”

“I have no patience with you,” began Crofton, warmly; but his sister stopped him with an imploring look, and then, turning to me, said, —

“Edward fancies that every one can be as energetic and active as himself, and occasionally forgets what you have just so well remarked as to the relative capacities of different people.”

“I want him to do something, to be something besides a dreamer!” burst he in, almost angrily.

“Well, then,” said I, “you shall see me begin this moment, for I will get down here and walk briskly back to the town.” I called to the postillions to pull up at the same time, and in spite of remonstrances, entreaties, — almost beseeching from Mary Crofton, — I persisted in my resolve, and bade them farewell.

Crofton was so much hurt that he could scarcely speak, and when he gave me his hand it was in the coldest of manners.

"But you'll keep our rendezvous, won't you!" said Mary; "we shall meet at Rome."

"I really wonder, Mary, how you can force our acquaintanceship where it is so palpably declined. Good-bye,—farewell," said he to me.

"Good-bye," said I, with a gulp that almost choked me; and away drove the carriage, leaving me standing in the train of dust it had raised. Every crack of the postboys' whips gave me a shock as though I had felt the thong on my own shoulders; and, at last, as sweeping round a turn of the road the carriage disappeared from view, such was the sense of utter desolation that came over me, that I sat down on a stone by the wayside, overwhelmed. I do not know if I ever felt such an utter sense of destitution as at that moment. "What a wealth of friends must a man possess," thought I, "who can afford to squander them in this fashion! How could I have repelled the counsels that kindness alone could have prompted? Surely Crofton must know far more of life than I did?" From this I went on to inquire why it was that the world showed itself so unforgiving to idleness in men of small fortune, since, if no burden to the community, they ought to be as free as their richer brethren. It was a puzzling theme, and though I revolved it long, I made but little of it; the only solution that occurred to me was, that the idleness of the humble man is not relieved by the splendors and luxuries which surround a rich man's leisure, and that the world resents the pretensions of ease unassociated with riches. In what a profound philosophy was it, then, that Diogenes rolled his tub about the streets! There was a mock purpose about it, that must have flattered his fellow-citizens. I feel assured that a great deal of the butterfly-hunting and beetle-gathering that we see around us is done in this spirit. They are a set of idle folk anxious to indulge their indolence without reproach.

Thus pondering and musing, I strolled back to the town. So still and silent was it, so free from all movement of traffic or business, that I was actually in the very centre of it without knowing it. There were streets without passengers, and shops without customers, and even *cafés* without guests, and I wondered within myself why people should thus con-

gregate to do nothing, and I rambled on from street to alley, and from alley to lane, never chancing upon one who had anything in hand. At last I gained the side of the lake, along which a little quay ran for some distance, ending in a sort of terraced walk, now grass-grown and neglected. There were at least the charms of fresh air and scenery here, though the worthy citizen seemed to hold them cheaply, and I rambled along to the end, where, by a broad flight of steps, the terrace communicated with the lake; a spot, doubtless, where, once on a time, the burghers took the water and went out a-pleasuring with fat fraus and fräuleins. I had reached the end, and was about to turn back again, when I caught sight of a man, seated on one of the lower steps, employed in watching two little toy ships which he had just launched. Now, this seemed to me the very climax of indolence, and I sat myself down on the parapet to observe him. His proceedings were indeed of the strangest, for as there was no wind to fill the sails and his vessels lay still and becalmed, he appeared to have bethought him of another mode to impart interest to him. He weighted one of them with little stones till he brought her gunwale level with the water, and then pressing her gently with his hand, he made her sink slowly down to the bottom. I'm not quite certain whether I laughed outright, or that some exclamation escaped me as I looked, but some noise I must unquestionably have made, for he started and turned up his head, and I saw Harpar the Englishman whom I had met the day before at Constance.

"Well, you're not much the wiser after all," said he, gruffly, and without even saluting me.

There was in the words, and fierce expression of his face, something that made me suspect him of insanity, and I would willingly have retired without reply had he not risen and approached me.

"Eh," repeated he, with a sneer, "ain't I right? You can make nothing of it?"

"I really don't understand you!" said I. "I came down here by the merest accident, and never was more astonished than to see you."

"Oh, of course; I am well used to that sort of thing,"

went he on in the same tone of scoff. "I've had some experience of these kinds of accidents before; but, as I said, it's no use, you're not within one thousand miles of it, no, nor any man in Europe."

It was quite clear to me now that he *was* mad, and my only care was to get speedily rid of him.

"I'm not surprised," said I, with an assumed ease, — "I'm not surprised at your having taken to so simple an amusement, for really in a place so dull as this any mode of passing the time would be welcome."

"Simple enough when you know it," said he, with a peculiar look.

"You arrived last night, I suppose?" said I, eager to get conversation into some pleasanter channel.

"Yes, I got here very late. I had the misfortune to sprain my ankle, and this detained me a long time on the way, and may keep me for a couple of days more."

I learned where he was stopping in the town, and seeing with what pain and difficulty he moved, I offered him my aid to assist him on his way.

"Well, I'll not refuse your help," said he, dryly; "but just go along yonder, about five-and-twenty or thirty yards, and I'll join you. You understand me, I suppose?"

Now, I really did not understand him, except to believe him perfectly insane, and suggest to me the notion of profiting by his lameness to make my escape with all speed. I conclude some generous promptings opposed this course, for I obeyed his injunctions to the very letter, and waited till he came up to me. He did so very slowly, and evidently in much suffering, assisted by a stick in one hand, while he carried his two little boats in the other.

"Shall I take charge of these for you?" said I, offering to carry them.

"No, don't trouble yourself," said he in the same rude tone. "Nobody touches these but myself."

I now gave him my arm, and we moved slowly along.

"What has become of the vagabonds? Are they here with you?" asked he, abruptly.

"I parted with them yesterday," said I, shortly, and not wishing to enter into further explanations.

"And you did wisely," rejoined he, with a serious air. "Even when these sort of creatures have nothing very bad about them, they are bad company, out of the haphazard chance way they gain a livelihood. If you reduce life to a game, you must yourself become a gambler. Now, there's one feature of that sort of existence intolerable to an honest man; it is, that to win himself, some one else must lose. Do you understand me?"

"I do, and am much struck by what you say."

"In that case," said he, with a nudge of his elbow against my side, — "in that case you might as well have not come down to watch *me*? — eh?"

I protested stoutly against this mistake, but I could plainly perceive with very little success.

"Let it be, let it be," said he, with a shake of the head. "As I said before, if you saw the thing done before your eyes you'd make nothing of it. I'm not afraid of you, or all the men in Europe! There now, there's a challenge to the whole of ye! Sit down every man of ye, with the problem before ye, and see what you'll make of it."

"Ah," thought I, "this is madness. Here is a poor monomaniac led away into the land of wild thoughts and fancies by one dominating caprice; who knows whether out of the realm of this delusion he may not be a man acute and sensible."

"No, no," muttered he, half aloud; "there are, maybe, half a million of men this moment manufacturing steam-engines; but it took one head, just one head, to set them all working, and if it was n't for old Watt, the world at this day would n't be five miles in advance of what it was a century back. I see," added he, after a moment, "you don't take much interest in these sort of things. *Your* line of parts is the walking gentleman, eh? Well, bear in mind it don't pay; no, sir, it don't pay! Here, this is my way; my lodging is down this lane. I'll not ask you to come further; thank you for your help, and good-bye."

"Let us not part here; come up to the inn and dine with me," said I, affecting his own blunt and abrupt manner.

"Why should *I* dine with *you*?" asked he, roughly.

"I can't exactly say," stammered I, "except out of

good-fellowship, just as, for instance, I accepted your invitation t' other morning to breakfast."

"Ah, yes, to be sure, so you did. Well, I'll come. We shall be all alone, I suppose?"

"Quite alone."

"All right, for I have no coat but this one;" and he looked down at the coarse sleeve as he spoke, with a strange and sad smile, and then waving his hand in token of farewell, he said, "I'll join you in half an hour," and disappeared up the lane.

I have already owned that I did not like this man; he had a certain short abrupt way that repelled me at every moment. When he differed in opinion with me, he was not satisfied to record his dissent, but he must set about demolishing my conviction, and this sort of intolerance pervaded all he said. There was, too, that business-like practical tone about him that jars fearfully on the sensitive fibre of the idler's nature.

It was exactly in proportion as his society was distasteful to me, that I felt a species of pride in associating with him, as though to say, "I am not one of those who must be fawned on and flattered. I am of a healthier and manlier stamp; I can afford to hear my judgments arraigned, and my opinions opposed." And in this humor I ascended the stairs of the hotel, and entered the room where our table was already laid out.

To compensate, as far as they could, for the rude reception of the day before, they had given me now the "grand apartment" of the inn, which, by a long balcony, looked over the lake, and that fine mountain range that leads to the Splügen pass. A beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers ornamented the centre of the small dinner-table, tastily decked with Bohemian glass, and napkins with lace borders. I rather liked this little display of elegance. It was a sort of ally on my side against the utilitarian plainness of my guest.

As I walked up and down the room, awaiting his arrival, I could not help a sigh, and a very deep one too, over the thought of what had been my enjoyment that moment if my guest had been one of a different temperament, — a man willing to take me on my own showing, and ready to accept

any version I should like to give of myself. How gracefully, how charmingly I could have played the host to such a man! What vigor would it have imparted to my imagination, what brilliancy to my fancy! With what a princely grace might I have dispensed my hospitalities, as though such occasions were the daily habit of my life; whereas a dinner with Harpar would be nothing more or less than an airing with a "Slave in the chariot," — a perpetual reminder, like the face of a poor relation, that my lot was cast in an humble sphere, and it was no use trying to disguise it.

"What's all this for?" said Harpar's harsh voice, as he entered the room. "Why did n't you order our mutton-chop below stairs in the common room, and not a banquet in this fashion? You must be well aware I could n't do this sort of thing by *you*. Why, then, have you attempted it with *me*?"

"I have always thought it was a host's prerogative," said I, meekly, "to be the arbiter of his own entertainment."

"So it might where he is the arbiter of his purse; but you know well enough neither you nor I have any pretension to these costly ways, and they have this disadvantage, that they make all intercourse stilted and unnatural. If you and I had to sit down to table, dressed in court suits, with wigs and bags, ain't it likely we'd be easy and cordial together? Well, this is precisely the same."

"I am really sorry," said I, with a forced appearance of courtesy, "to have incurred so severe a lesson, but you must allow me this one transgression before I begin to profit by it." And so saying, I rang the bell and ordered dinner.

Harpar made no reply, but walked the room, with his hands deep in his pockets, humming a tune to himself as he went.

At last we sat down to table; everything was excellent and admirably served, but we ate on in silence, not a syllable exchanged between us. As the dessert appeared, I tried to open conversation. I affected to seem easy and unconcerned, but the cold half-stern look of my companion repelled all attempts, and I sat very sad and much discouraged, sipping my wine.

"May I order some brandy-and-water? I like it better than these French wines," asked he, abruptly; and as I

arose to ring for it, he added, "and you'll not object to me having a pipe of strong Cavendish?" And therewith he produced a leather bag and a very much smoked meersch-
schaum, short and ungainly as his own figure. As he thrust his hand into the pouch, a small boat, about the size of a lady's thimble, rolled out from amidst the tobacco; he quickly took it and placed it in his waistcoat pocket, — the act being done with a sort of hurry that with a man of less self-possession might have perhaps evinced confusion.

"You fancy you've seen something, don't you?" said he, with a defiant laugh. "I'd wager a five-pound note, if I had one, that you think at this moment you have made a great discovery. Well, there it is, make much of it!"

As he spoke, he produced the little boat, and laid it down before me. I own that this speech and the act convinced me that he was insane; I was aware that intense suspectfulness is the great characteristic of madness, and everything tended to show that he was deranged.

Rather to conceal what was passing in my own mind than out of curiosity, I took up the little toy to examine it. It was beautifully made, and finished with a most perfect neatness; the only thing I could not understand being four small holes on each side of the keel, fastened by four little plugs.

"What are these for?" asked I.

"Can't you guess?" said he, laughingly.

"No; I have never seen such before."

"Well," said he, musingly, "perhaps they *are* puzzling, — I suppose they are. But mayhap, too, if I thought you'd guess the meaning, I'd not have been so ready to show it to you." And with this he replaced the boat in his pocket and smoked away. "You ain't a genius, my worthy friend, that's a fact," said he, sententiously.

"I opine that the same judgment might be passed upon a great many?" said I, testily.

"No," continued he, following on his own thoughts without heeding my remark, "*you'll* not set the Thames a-fire."

"Is that the best test of a man's ability?" asked I, sneeringly.

"You're the sort of fellow that ought to be — let us see

now what you ought to be,—yes, you're just the stamp of man for an apothecary."

"You are so charming in your frankness," said I, "that you almost tempt me to imitate you."

"And why not? Sure we ought n't to talk to each other like two devils in waiting. Out with what you have to say!"

"I was just thinking," said I, — "led to it by that speculative turn of yours, — I was just thinking in what station *your* abilities would have pre-eminently distinguished you."

"Well, have you hit it?"

"I'm not quite certain," said I, trying to screw up my courage for an impertinence, "but I half suspect that in our great national works — our lines of railroad, for instance — there must be a strong infusion of men with tastes and habits resembling yours."

"You mean the navvies?" broke he in. "You're right, I was a navvy once; I turned the first spadeful of earth on the Coppleston Junction, and, seeing what a good thing might be made of it, I suggested task-work to my comrades, and we netted from four-and-six to five shillings a day each. In eight months after, I was made an inspector; so that you see strong sinews can be good allies to a strong head and a stout will."

I do not believe that the most angry rebuke, the most sarcastic rejoinder, could have covered me with a tenth part of the shame and confusion that did these few words. I'd have given worlds, if I had them, to make a due reparation for my rudeness, but I knew not how to accomplish it. I looked into his face to read if I might hit upon some trait by which his nature could be approached; but I might as well have gazed at a line of railroad to guess the sort of town that it led to. The stern, rugged, bold countenance seemed to imply little else than daring and determination, and I could not but wonder how I had ever dared to take a liberty with one of his stamp.

"Well," said I, at last, and wishing to lead him back to his story, "and after being made inspector —"

"You can speak German well," said he, totally inattentive

to my question; "just ask one of these people when there will be any conveyance from this to Ragatz."

"Ragatz, of all places!" exclaimed I.

"Yes; they tell me it's good for the rheumatics, and I have got some old shoulder pains I'd like to shake off before winter. And then this sprain, too; I foresee I shall not be able to walk much for some days to come."

"Ragatz is on my road; I am about to cross the Splügen into Italy; I'll bear you company so far, if you have no objection."

"Well, it may not seem civil to say it, but I have an objection," said he, rising from the table. "When I've got weighty things on my mind, I've a bad habit of talking of them to myself aloud. I can't help it, and so I keep strictly alone till my plans are all fixed and settled; after that, there's no danger of my revealing them to any one. There now, you have my reason, and you'll not dispute that it's a good one."

"You may not be too distrustful of yourself," said I, laughing, "but, assuredly, you are far too flattering in your estimate of *my* acuteness."

"I'll not risk it," said he, bluntly, as he sought for his hat.

"Wait a moment," said I. "You told me at Constance that you were in want of money; at the time I was not exactly in funds myself. Yesterday, however, I received a remittance; and if ten or twenty pounds be of any service, they are heartily at your disposal."

He looked at me fixedly, almost sternly, for a minute or two, and then said, —

"Is this true, or is it that you have changed your mind about me?"

"True," said I, — "strictly true."

"Will this loan — I mean it to be a loan — inconvenience you much?"

"No, no; I make you the offer freely."

"I take it, then. Let me have ten pounds; and write down there an address where I am to remit it some day or other, though I can't say when."

"There may be some difficulty about that," said I. "Stay.

I mean to be at Rome some time in the winter; send it to me there."

"To what banker?"

"I have no banker; I never had a banker. There's my name, and let the post-office be the address."

"Whichever way you're bent on going, you're not on the road to be a rich man," said Harpar, as he deposited my gold in his leather purse; "but I hope you'll not lose by me. Good-bye." He gave me his hand, not very warmly or cordially, either, and was gone ere I well knew it.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MY EXPLOSION AT THE TABLE D'HÔTE.

I WENT the next morning to take leave of Harpar before starting, but found, to my astonishment, that he was already off! He had, I learned, hired a small carriage to convey him to Bregenz, and had set out before daybreak. I do not know why this should have annoyed me, but it did so, and set me a-thinking over the people whom Echstein in his "Erfahrungen," says, are born to be dupes. "There is," says he, "a race of men who are 'eingeborne Narren,' — 'native numskulls,' one might say, — who muddy the streams of true benevolence by indiscriminating acts of kindness, and who, by always aiding the wrong-doer, make themselves accomplices of vice." Could it be that I was in this barren category? Harpar had told me, the evening before, that he would not leave Lindau till his sprain was better, and now he was off, just as if, having no further occasion for me, he was glad to be rid of my companionship — just as if — I was beginning again to start another conjecture, when I bethought me that there is not a more deceptive formula in the whole cyclopædia of delusion than that which opens with these same words, "just as if." Rely upon it, amiable reader, that whenever you find yourself driven to explain a motive, trace a cause, or reconcile a discrepancy, by "just as if," the chances are about seven to three you are wrong. If I was not in the bustle of paying my bill and strapping on my knapsack, I'd convince you on this head; but, as the morning is a bright but mellow one of early autumn, and my path lies along the placid lake, waveless and still, with many a tinted tree reflected in its fair mirror, let us not think of knaves and rogues, but rather dwell on the pleasanter thought of all the

good and grateful things which daily befall us in this same life of ours. I am full certain that almost all of us enter upon what is called the world in too combative a spirit. We are too fond of dragon slaying, and rather than be disappointed of our sport, we'd fall foul of a pet lamb, for want of a tiger. Call it self-delusion, credulity, what you will, it is a faith that makes life very livable, and, without it,

"We feel a light has left the world,
A nameless sort of treasure,
As though one pluck'd the crimson heart
From out the rose of pleasure.
I could forgive the fate that made
Me poor and young to-morrow,
To have again the soul that played
So tenderly in sorrow,
So buoyantly in happiness.
Ay, I would brook deceiving,
And even the deceiver bless,
Just to go on believing!"

"Still," thought I, "one ought to maintain self-respect; one should not willingly make himself a dupe. And then I began to wish that Vaterchen had come up, and that Tintefleck was rushing towards me with tears in her eyes, and my money-bag in her hands. I wanted to forget them. I tried in a hundred ways to prevent them crossing my memory; but though there is a most artful system of artificial "mnemonics" invented by some one, the Lethal art has met no explorer, and no man has ever yet found out the way to shut the door against bygones. I believe it is scarcely more than five miles to Bregenz from Lindau, and yet I was almost as many hours on the road. I sat down, perhaps twenty times, lost in revery; indeed, I'm not very sure that I did n't take a sound sleep under a spreading willow, so that, when I reached the inn, the company was just going in to dinner at the *table d'hôte*. Simple and unpretentious as that board was, the company that graced it was certainly distinguished, being no less than the Austrian field-marshal in command of the district, and the officers of his staff. To English notions, it seemed very strange to see a nobleman of the highest rank, in the proudest state of

Europe, seated at a dinner-table open to all comers, at a fraction less than one shilling a head, and where some of the government officials of the place daily came.

It was not without a certain sense of shame that I found myself in the long low chamber, in which about twenty officers were assembled, whose uniforms were all glittering with stars, medals, and crosses; in fact, to a weak-minded civilian like myself, they gave the impression of a group of heroes fresh come from all the triumphant glories of a campaign. Between the staff, which occupied one end of the long table, and the few townsfolk who sat at the other, there intervened a sort of frontier territory uninhabited; and it was here that the waiter located me, — an object of observation and remark to each. Resolving to learn how I was treated by my critics, I addressed the waiter in the very worst French, and protested my utter ignorance of German. I had promised myself much amusement from this expedient, but was doomed to a severe disappointment, — the officers coolly setting me down for a servant, while the townspeople pronounced me a pedler; and when these judgments had been recorded, instead of entering upon a psychological examination of my nature, temperament, and individuality, they never noticed me any more. I felt hurt at this, more, indeed, for their sakes than my own, since I bethought me of the false impression that is current of this people throughout Europe, where they have the reputation of philosophers deeply engaged in researches into character, minute anatomists of human thought and man's affections; "and yet," muttered I, "they can sit at table with one of the most remarkable of men, and be as ignorant of all about him as the husbandman who toils at his daily labor is of the mineral treasures that lie buried down beneath him."

"I will read them a lesson," thought I. "They shall see that in the humble guise of foot-traveller it may be the pleasure of men of rank and station to journey." The townsfolk, when the dessert made its appearance, rose to take their departure, each before he left the room making a profound obeisance to the general, and then another but less lowly act of homage to the staff, showing by this that strangers

were expected to withdraw, while the military guests sat over their wine. Indeed, a very significant look from the last person who left the room conveyed to me the etiquette of the place. I was delighted at this, — it was the very opportunity I longed for; and so, with a clink of my knife against my wine-glass, the substitute for a bell in use amongst humble hostels, I summoned the waiter, and asked for his list of wines. I saw that my act had created some astonishment amongst the others, but it excited nothing more, and now they had all lighted their pipes, and sat smoking away quite regardless of my presence. I had ordered a flask of Steinberger at four florins, and given most special directions that my glass should have a "roped rim," and be of a tender green tint, but not too deep to spoil the color of the wine.

My admonitions were given aloud, and in a tone of command; but I perceived that they failed to create any impression upon my moustached neighbors. I might have ordered nectar or hypocras, for all that they seemed to care about me. I raked up in memory all the impertinent and insolent things Henri Heine had ever said of Austria; I bethought me how they tyrannized in the various provinces of their scattered empire, and how they were hated by Hun, Slavac, and Italian; I revelled in those slashing leading articles that used to show up the great but bankrupt bully, and I only wished I was "own correspondent" to something at home to give my impressions of "Austria and her military system."

Little as you think of that pale sad-looking stranger, who sits sipping his wine in solitude at the foot of the table, he is about to transmit yourselves and your country to a remote posterity. "Ay!" muttered I, "to be remembered when the Danube will be a choked-up rivulet, and the park of Schönbrunn a prairie for the buffalo." I am not exactly aware how or why these changes were to have occurred, but Lord Macaulay's New Zealander might have originated them.

While I thus mused and brooded, the tramp of four horses came clattering down the street, and soon after swept into the arched doorway of the inn with a rolling and thunderous sound.

"Here he comes; here he is at last! said a young officer, who had rushed in haste to the window; and at the announcement a very palpable sentiment of satisfaction seemed to spread itself through the company, even to the grim old field-marshal, who took his pipe from his mouth to say, —

"He is in time, — he saves 'arrest!'"

As he spoke, a tall man in uniform entered the room, and walking with military step till he came in front of the General, said, in a loud but respectful voice, —

"I have the honor to report myself as returned to duty."

The General replied something I could not catch, and then shook him warmly by the hand, making room for him to sit down next him.

"How far did your Royal Highness go? Not to Coire?" said the General.

"Far beyond it, sir," said the other. "I went the whole way to the Splügen, and if it were not for the terror of your displeasure, I'd have crossed the mountain and gone on to Chiavenna."

The fact that I was listening to the narrative of a royal personage was not the only bond of fascination to me, for somehow the tone of the speaker's voice sounded familiarly to my ears, and I could have sworn I had heard it before. As he was at the same side of the table with myself, I could not see him; but while he continued to talk, the impression grew each moment more strong that I must have met him previously.

I could gather — it was easy enough to do so — from the animated looks of the party, and the repeated bursts of laughter that followed his sallies, that the newly arrived officer was a wit and authority amongst his comrades. His elevated rank, too, may have contributed to this popularity. Must I own that he appeared in the character that to me is particularly offensive? He was a "narrator." That vulgar adage of "two of a trade" has a far wider acceptance when applied to the operations of intellect than when addressed to the work of men's hands. To see this jealousy at its height, you must look for it amongst men of letters, artists, actors, or, better still, those social performers who are the

bright spirits of dinner-parties,—the charming men of society. All the animosities of political or religious hate are mild compared to the detestation this rivalry engenders; and now, though the audience was a foreign one, which I could have no pretension to amuse, I conceived the most bitter dislike for the man who had engaged their attention.

I do not know how it may be with others, but to myself there has always been this difficulty in a foreign language, that until I have accustomed myself to the tone of voice and the manner of a speaker, I can rarely follow him without occasional lapses. Now, on the present occasion, the narrator, though speaking distinctly, and with a good accent, had a very rapid utterance, and it was not till I had familiarized my ear with his manner that I could gather his words correctly. Nor was my difficulty lessened by the fact that, as he pretended to be witty and epigrammatic, frequent bursts of laughter broke from his audience and obscured his speech. He was, as it appeared, giving an account of a fishing excursion he had just taken to one of the small mountain lakes near Poppenheim, and it was clear enough he was one who always could eke an adventure out of even the most ordinary incident of daily life.

This fishing story had really nothing in it, though he strove to make out fifty points of interest or striking situations out of the veriest commonplace. At last, however, I saw that, like a practised story-teller, he was hoarding up his great incident for the finish.

"As I have told you," said he, "I engaged the entire of the little inn for myself; there were but five rooms in it altogether, and though I did not need more than two, I took the rest, that I might be alone and unmolested. Well, it was on my second evening there, as I sat smoking my pipe at the door, and looking over my tackle for the morrow, there came up the glen the strange sound of wheels, and, to my astonishment, a travelling-carriage soon appeared, with four horses driven in hand; and as I saw in a moment, it was a *lohnkutscher*, who had taken the wrong turning after leaving Ragatz, and mistaken the road, for the highway ceases about two miles above Poppenheim, and dwindles down to a mere mule-path. Leaving my host to explain

the mistake to the travellers, I hastily re-entered the house, just as the carriage drove up. The explanation seemed a very prolix one, for when I looked out of the window, half an hour afterwards, there were the horses still standing at the door, and the driver, with a large branch of alder, whipping away the flies from them, while the host continued to hold his place at the carriage door. At last he entered my room, and said that the travellers, two foreign ladies, — he thought them Russians, — had taken the wrong road, but that the elder, what between fatigue and fear, was so overcome that she could not proceed further, and entreated that they might be afforded any accommodation — mere shelter for the night — rather than retrace their road to Ragatz.

“‘Well,’ said I, carelessly, ‘let them have the rooms on the other side of the hall; so that they only stop for one night, the intrusion will not signify.’ Not a very gracious reply, perhaps, but I did not want to be gracious. The fact was, as the old lady got out, I saw something like an elephant’s leg, in a fur boot, that quite decided me on not making acquaintance with the travellers, and I was rash enough to imagine they must be both alike. Indeed, I was so resolute in maintaining my solitude undisturbed, that I told my host on no account whatever to make me any communication from the strangers, nor on any pretext to let me feel that they were lodged under the same roof with myself. Perhaps, if the next day had been one to follow my usual sport, I should have forgotten all about them, but it was one of such rain as made it perfectly impossible to leave the house. I doubt if I ever saw rain like it. It came down in sheets, like water splashed out of buckets, flattening the small trees to the earth, and beating down all the light foliage into the muddy soil beneath; meanwhile the air shook with the noise of the swollen torrents, and all the mountain-streams crashed and thundered away, like great cataracts. Rain can really become grand at such moments, and no more resembling a mere shower than the cry of a single brawler in the streets is like the roar of a mighty multitude. It was so fine that I determined I would go down to a little wooden bridge over the river, whence I could see the stream as it came down, tumbling and

splashing, from a cleft in the mountain. I soon dressed myself in all my best waterproofs, — hat, cape, boots, and all, — and set out. Until I was fully embarked on my expedition, I had no notion of the severity of the storm, and it was with considerable difficulty I could make head against the wind and rain together, while the slippery ground made walking an actual labor.

“At last I reached the river; but of the bridge, the only trace was a single beam, which, deeply buried in the bank at one extremity, rose and fell in the surging flood, like the arm of a drowning swimmer. The stream had completely filled the channel, and swept along, with fragments of timber, and even furniture, in its muddy tide; farm produce, and implements too, came floating by, showing what destruction had been effected higher up the river. As I stood gazing on the current, I saw, at a little distance from me, a man, standing motionless beside the river, and apparently lost in thought, — so, at least, he seemed; for though not at all clad in a way to resist the storm, he remained there, wet and soaked through, totally regardless of the weather. On inquiring at the inn, I learned that this was the *lohnkutscher* — the *vetturino* — of the travellers, and who, in attempting to ascertain if the stream were fordable, had lost one of his best horses, and barely escaped being carried away himself. Until that, I had forgotten all about the strangers, who, it now appeared, were close prisoners like myself. While the host was yet speaking, the *lohnkutscher* came up, and in a tone of equality, that showed me he thought I was in his own line of business, asked if I would sell him one of my nags then in the stable.

“Not caring to disabuse him of his error regarding my rank, I did not refuse him so flatly as I might, and he pressed the negotiation very warmly in consequence. At last, to get rid of him, I declared that I would not break up my team, and retired into the house. I was not many minutes in my room, when a courier came, with a polite message from his mistress, to beg I would speak with her. I went at once, and found an old lady, — she was English, as her French bespoke, — very well mannered and well bred, who apologized for troubling me; but having heard from her

vetturino that my horses were disengaged, and that I might, if not disposed to sell one of them, hire out the entire team, to take their carriage as far as Andeer — By the time she got thus far, I perceived that she, too, mistook me for a *lohnkutscher*. It just struck me what good fun it would be to carry on the joke. To be sure, the lady herself presented no inducement to the enterprise; and as I thus balanced the case, there came into the room one of the prettiest girls I ever saw. She never turned a look towards where I was standing, nor deigned to notice me at all, but passed out of the room as rapidly as she entered; still, I remembered that I had already seen her before, and passed a delightful evening in her company at a little inn in the Black Forest."

When the narrator had got thus far in his story, I leaned forward to catch a full view of him, and saw, to my surprise, and, I own, to my misery, that he was the German count we had met at the Titi-See. So overwhelming was this discovery to me, that I heard nothing for many minutes after. All of that wretched scene between us on the last evening at the inn came full to my memory, and I bethought me of lying the whole night on the hard table, fevered with rage and terror alternately. If it were not that his narrative regarded Miss Herbert now, I would have skulked out of the room, and out of the inn, and out of the town itself, never again to come under the insolent stare of those wicked gray eyes; but in that name there was a fascination, — not to say that a sense of jealousy burned at my heart like a furnace.

The turmoil of my thought lost me a great deal of his story, and might have lost me more, had not the hearty laughter of his comrades recalled me once again to attention.

He was describing how, as a *vetturino*, he drove their carriage with his own spanking gray horses to Coire, and thence to Andeer. He had bargained, it seemed, that Miss Herbert should travel outside in the cabriolet, but she failed to keep her pledge, so that they only met at stray moments during the journey. It was in one of these she said laughingly to him, —

"‘Nothing would surprise me less than to learn, some

fine morning, that you were a prince in disguise, or a great count of the empire, at least. It was only the other day we were honored with the incognito presence of a royal personage; I do not exactly know who, but Mrs. Keats could tell you. He left us abruptly at Schaffhausen.'

" 'You can't mean the creature,' said I, 'that I saw in your company at the Titi-See?'

" 'The same,' said she, rather angrily.

" 'Why, he is a saltimbanque; I saw him the morning I came through Constance, with some others of his troop dragged before the maire for causing a disturbance in a cabaret; one of the most consummate impostors, they told me, in Europe.'"

" 'An infamous falsehood, and a base liar the man who says it!' cried I, springing to my legs, and standing revealed before the company in an attitude of haughty defiance. "I am the person you have dared to defame. I have never assumed to be a prince, and as little am I a rope-dancer. I am an English gentleman, travelling for his pleasure, and I hurl back every word you have said of me with contempt and defiance."

Before I had finished this insolent speech, some half-dozen swords were drawn and brandished in the air, very eager, as it seemed, to cut me to pieces, and the Count himself required all the united strength of the party to save me from his hands. At last I was pushed, hustled, and dragged out of the room to another smaller one on the same floor, and, the key being turned on me, left to my very happy reflections.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DUEL WITH PRINCE MAX.

I HAD no writing-materials, but I had just composed a long letter to the "Times" on "the outrageous treatment and false imprisonment of a British subject in Austria," when my door was opened by a thin, lank-jawed, fierce-eyed man in uniform, who announced himself as the Rittmeister von Mahony, of the Keyser Hussars.

"A countryman — an Irishman," said I, eagerly, clasping his hand with warmth.

"That is to say, two generations back," replied he; "my grandfather Terence was a lieutenant in Trenck's Horse, but since that none of us have ever been out of Austria."

If these tidings fell coldly on my heart, just beginning to glow with the ardor of home and country, I soon saw that it takes more than two generations to wash out the Irishman from a man's nature. The honest Rittmeister, with scarcely a word of English in his vocabulary, was as hearty a countryman as if he had never journeyed out of the land of Bog.

He had heard "all about it," he said, by way of arresting the eloquent indignation that filled me; and he added, "And the more fool myself to notice the matter;" asking me, quaintly, if I had never heard of our native maxim that says, "One man ought never to fall upon forty." "Well," said he, with a sigh, "what's done can't be undone; and let us see what's to come next? I see you are a gentleman, and the worse luck yours."

"What do you mean by that?" asked I.

"Just this: you'll have to fight; and if you were a 'Gemeiner' — a plebeian — you'd get off."

I turned away to the window to wipe a tear out of my eye; it had come there without my knowing it, and, as I did so, I devoted myself to the death of a hero.

"Yes," said I, "*she* is in this incident — she has her part in this scene of my life's drama, and I will not disgrace her presence. I will die like a man of honor rather than that her name should be disparaged."

He went on to tell me of my opponent, who was brother to a reigning sovereign, and himself a royal highness, — Prince Max of Swabia. "He was not," he added, "by any means a bad fellow, though not reputed to be perfectly sane on certain topics." However, as his eccentricities were very harmless ones, merely offshoots of an exaggerated personal vanity, it was supposed that some active service, and a little more intercourse with the world, would cure him. "Not," added he, "that one can say he has shown many signs of amendment up to this, for he never makes an excursion of half-a-dozen days from home without coming back filled with the restless passion of some young queen or archduchess for him. As he forgets these as fast as he imagines them, there is usually nothing to lament on the subject. Now you are in possession of all that you need know about *him*. Tell me something of yourself; and first, have you served?"

"Never."

"Was your father a soldier, or your grandfather?"

"Neither."

"Have you any connections on the mother's side in the army?"

"I am not aware of one."

He gave a short, hasty cough, and walked the room twice with his hands clasped at his back, and then, coming straight in front of me, said, "And your name? What's your name?"

"Potts! Potts!" said I, with a firm energy.

"Potztausend!" cried he, with a grim laugh: "what a strange name!"

"I said Potts, Herr Rittmeister, and not Potztausend," rejoined I, haughtily.

"And I heard you," said he; "it was involuntarily on my part to add the termination. And who are the Pottses? Are they noble?"

"Nothing of the kind, — respectable middle-class folk; some in trade, some clerks in mercantile houses, some

holding small government employments, one, perhaps the chief of the family, an eminent apothecary!"

As if I had uttered the most irresistible joke, at this word he held his hands over his face and shook with laughter.

"Heilge Joseph!" cried he, at last, "this is too good! The Prince Max going out with an apothecary's nephew, or, maybe, his son!"

"His son upon this occasion," said I, gravely.

He, did not reply for some minutes, and then, leaning over the back of a chair, and regarding me very fixedly, he said, —

"You have only to say who you are, and what your belongings, and nothing will come of this affair. In fact, what with your little knowledge of German, your imperfect comprehension of what the Prince said, and your own station in life, I'll engage to arrange everything and get you off clear!"

"In a word," said I, "I am to plead in *forma inferioris*, — is n't that it?"

"Just so," said he, puffing out a long cloud from his pipe.

"I'd rather die first!" cried I, with an energy that actually startled him.

"Well," said he, after a pause, "I think it is very probable that will come of it; but, if it be your choice, I have nothing to say."

"Go back, Herr Rittmeister," cried I, "and arrange the meeting for the very earliest moment."

I said this with a strong purpose, for I felt if the event were to come off at once I could behave well.

"As you are resolved on this course," said he, "do not make any such confidences to others as you have made to me; nothing about those Pottses in haberdashery and dry goods, but just simply you are the high and well-born Potts of Pottsheim. Not a word more."

I bowed an assent, but so anxious was he to impress this upon me that he went over it all once more.

"As it will be for me to receive the Prince's message, the choice of weapons will be yours. What are you most expert with? I mean, after the pistol?" said he, grinning.

"I am about equally skilled in all. Rapier, pistol, or sabre are all alike to me."

"*Der Teufel!*" cried he: "I was not counting upon this; and as the sabre is the Prince's weakest arm, we'll select it."

I bowed again, and more blandly.

"There is but one thing more," said he, turning about just as he was leaving the room. "Don't forget that in this case the gross provocation came from *you*, and, therefore, be satisfied with self-defence, or, at most, a mere flesh wound. Remember that the Prince is a near connection of the Royal Family of England, and it would be irreparable ruin to you were he to fall by your hand." And with this he went out.

Now, had he gravely bound me over not to strangle the lions in the Tower, it could not have appeared more ridiculous to me than this injunction, and if there had been in my heart the smallest fund of humor, I could have laughed at it; but, Heaven knows, none of my impulses took a mirthful turn at that moment, and there never was invented the drollery that could wring a smile from me.

I was sitting in a sort of stupor—I know not how long—when the door opened, and the Rittmeister's head peered in.

"To-morrow morning at five!" cried he. "I will fetch you half an hour before." The door closed, and he was off.

It was now a few minutes past eight o'clock, and there were, therefore, something short of nine hours of life left to me. I have heard that Victor Hugo is an amiable and kindly disposed man, and I feel assured, if he ever could have known the tortures he would have inflicted, he would never have designed the terrible record entitled "*Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*." I conclude it was designed as a sort of appeal against death punishments. I doubt much of its efficacy in altering legislation, while I feel assured, that if ever it fall in the way of one whose hours are numbered, it must add indescribably to his misery.

When, how, or by whom my supper was served, I never knew. I can only remember that a very sleepy waiter roused

me out of a half-drowsy reverie about midnight, by asking if he were to remove the dishes, or let them remain till morning. I bade him leave them, and me also, and when the door was closed I sat down to my meal. It was cold and unappetizing. I would have deemed it unwholesome, too, but I remembered that the poor stomach it was destined for would never be called on to digest it, and that for once I might transgress without the fear of dyspepsia. My case was precisely that of the purseless traveller, who, we are told, can sing before the robber, just as if want ever suggested melody, or that being poor was a reason for song. So with me any excess was open to me just because it was impossible!

"Still," thought I, "great criminals — and surely I am not as bad as they — eat very heartily." And so I cut the tough fowl vigorously in two, and placed half of it on my plate. I filled myself out a whole goblet of wine, and drank it off. I repeated this, and felt better. I fell to now with a will, and really made an excellent supper. There were some potted sardines that I secretly resolved to have for my breakfast, when the sudden thought flashed across me that I was never to breakfast any more. I verily believe that I tasted in that one instant a whole life long of agony and bitterness.

There was in my friendless, lone condition, my youth, the mild and gentle traits of my nature, and my guileless simplicity, just that combination of circumstances which would make my fate peculiarly pathetic, and I imagined my countrymen standing beside the gravestone and muttering "Poor Potts!" till I felt my heart almost bursting with sorrow over myself.

"Cut off at three-and-twenty!" sobbed I; "in the very opening bud of his promise!"

"Misfortune is a pebble with many facets," says the Chinese adage, "and wise is he who turns it around till he find the smooth one."

"Is there such here?" thought I. "And where can it be?" With all my ingenuity I could not discover it, when at last there crossed my mind how the event would figure in the daily papers, and be handed down to remote posterity. I

imagined the combat itself described in the language almost of a lion-hunt. "Potts, who had never till that moment had a sword in his hand, — Potts, though at this time severely wounded, and bleeding profusely, nothing dismayed by the ferocious attack of his opponent, — Potts maintained his guard with all the coolness of a consummate swordsman." How I wished my life might be spared just to let me write the narrative of the combat. I would like, besides, to show the world how generously I could treat an adversary, with what delicacy I could respect his motives, and how nobly deal even with his injustice.

"Was that two o'clock?" said I, starting up, while the humming sound of the gong bell filled the room. "Is it possible that but three hours now stand between me and —" I gave a shudder that made me feel as if I was standing in a fearful thorough draught, and actually looked up to see if the window were not open; but no, it was closed, the night calm, and the sky full of stars. "Oh!" exclaimed I, "if there are Pottses up amongst you yonder, I hope destiny may deal more kindly by them than down here. I trust that in those glorious regions a higher and purer intelligence prevails, and, above all things, that duelling is proclaimed the greatest of crimes." Remnant of barbarism! it is worse ten thousand times; it is the whole suit, costume, and investiture of an uncivilized age. "Poor Potts!" said I; "you went out upon your life-voyage with very generous intentions towards posterity. I wonder how it will treat *you*? Will it vindicate your memory, uphold your fame, and dignify your motives? Will it be said in history, 'Amongst the memorable events of the period was the duel between the Prince Max of Swabia and an Irish gentleman named Potts. To understand fully the circumstance of this remarkable conflict, it is necessary to premise that Potts was not what is vulgarly called constitutionally brave; but he was more. He was —'? Ah! there was the puzzle. How was that miserable biographer ever to arrive at the secret of an organization fine and subtle as mine? If I could but leave it on record — if I could but transmit to the ages that will come after me the invaluable key to the mystery of my being — a few days would suffice — a week

certainly would do it—and why should I not have time given me for this? I will certainly propose this to the Rittmeister when he comes. There can be little doubt but he will see the matter with my own eyes.”

As if I had summoned him by enchantment, there he stood at the door, wrapped in his great white cavalry cloak, and looking gigantic and ominous together.

“There is no carriage-road,” said he, “to the place we are going, and I have come thus early that we may stroll along leisurely, and enjoy the fresh air of the morning.”

Until that moment I had never believed how heartless human nature could be! To talk of enjoyment, to recall the world and its pleasures, in any way, to one situated like I, was a bold and scarcely credible cruelty; but the words did me good service; they armed me with a sardonic contempt for life and mankind; and so I protested that I was charmed with the project, and out we set.

My companion was not talkative; he was a quiet, almost depressed man, who had led a very monotonous existence, with little society among his comrades; so that he did not offer me the occasion I sought for, of saying saucy and sneering things of the world at large. Indeed, the first observation he made was, that we were in a locality that ought to be interesting to Irishmen, since an ancient shrine of St. Patrick marked the spot of the convent to which we were approaching. No remark could have been more ill-timed! to look back into the past, one ought to have some vista of the future. Who can sympathize with by-gones when he is counting the minutes that are to make him one of them?

What a bore that old Rittmeister was with his antiquities, and how I hated him as he said, “If your time was not so limited I’d have taken you over to St. Gallen to inspect the manuscripts.” I felt choking as he uttered these words. How was my time so limited? I did not dare to ask. Was he barbarous enough to mean that if I had another day to live I might have passed it pleasantly in turning over musty missals in a monastery?

At last we came to a halt in a little grove of pines, and he said, “Have you any address to give me of friends or

relatives, or have you any peculiar directions on any subject?"

"You made a remark last night, Herr Rittmeister," said I, "which did not at the moment produce the profound impression upon me that subsequent reflection has enforced. You said that if his Royal Highness were fully aware that his antagonist was the son of a practising chemist and apothecary —"

"That I could have put off this event; true enough, but when you refused that alternative, and insisted on satisfaction, I myself, as your countryman, gave the guarantee for your rank, which nothing now will make me retract. Understand me well, — nothing will make me retract."

"You are pleased to be precipitate," said I, with an attempt to sneer; "my remark had but one object, and that was my personal disinclination to obtain a meeting under a false pretext."

"Make your mind easy on that score. It will be all precisely the same in about an hour hence."

I nearly fainted as I heard this; it seemed as though a cold stream of water ran through my spine and paralyzed the very marrow inside.

"You have your choice of weapons," said he, curtly; "which are you best at?"

I was going to say the "javelin," but I was ashamed; and yet should a man sacrifice life for a false modesty? While I reasoned thus, he pointed to a group of officers close to the garden wall of the convent, and said, —

"They are all waiting yonder; let us hasten on."

If I had been mortally wounded, and was dragging my feeble limbs along to rest them forever on some particular spot, I might have, probably, effected my progress as easily as I now did. The slightest inequality of ground tripped me, and I stumbled at every step.

"You are cold," said my companion, "and probably unused to early rising, — taste this."

He gave me his brandy-flask, and I finished it off at a draught. Blessings be on the man who invented alcohol! All the ethics that ever were written cannot work the same miracle in a man's nature as a glass of whiskey. Talk of

all the wonders of chemistry, and what are they to the simple fact that twopennyworth of cognac can convert a coward into a hero?

I was not quite sure that my antagonist had not resorted to a similar sort of aid, for he seemed as light-hearted and as jolly as though he was out for a picnic. There was a jauntiness, too, in the way he took out his cigar, and scraped his lucifer-match on a beech-tree, that quite struck me, and I should like to have imitated it if I could.

"If it's the same to you, take the sabre, it's his weakest weapon," whispered the Rittmeister in my ear; and I agreed. And now there was a sort of commotion about the choice of the ground and the places, in which my friend seemed to stand by me most manfully. Then there followed a general measurement of swords, and a fierce comparison of weapons. I don't know how many were not thrust into my hand, one saying, "Take this, it is well balanced in the wrist; or if you like a heavy guard, here's your arm!"

"To *me*, it is a matter of perfect indifference," said I, jauntily. "All weapons are alike."

"He will attack fiercely, and the moment the word is given," whispered the Rittmeister, "so be on your guard; keep your hilt full before you, or he'll slice off your nose before you are aware of it."

"Be not so sure of that till you have seen my sword play," said I, fiercely; and my heart swelled with a fierce sentiment that must have been courage, for I never remember to have felt the like before. I know I was brave at that moment, for if, by one word, I could have averted the combat, I would not have uttered it.

"To your places," cried the umpire, "and on your guard! Are you ready?"

"Ready!" re-echoed I, wildly, while I gave a mad flourish of my weapon round my head that threw the whole company into a roar of laughter; and, at the same instant, two figures, screaming fearfully, rushed from the beech copse, and, bursting their way through the crowd, fell upon me with the most frantic embraces, amidst the louder laughter of the others. O shame and ineffable disgrace! O misery never to be forgotten! It was Vaterchen who now grasped

my knees, and Tintefleck who clung round my neck and kissed me repeatedly. From the time of the Laocoon, no one ever struggled to free himself as I did, but all in vain; my efforts, impeded by the sword, lest I might unwillingly wound them, were all fruitless, and we rolled upon the ground inextricably commingled and struggling.

"Was I right?" cried the Prince. "Was I right in calling this fellow a saltimbanque? See him now with his comrades around him, and say if I was mistaken."

"How is this?" whispered the Rittmeister. "Have you dared to deceive *me*?"

"I have deceived no one," said I, trying to rise; and I poured forth a torrent of not very coherent eloquence, as the mirth of my audience seemed to imply; but, fortunately, Vaterchen had now obtained a hearing, and was detailing in very fluent language the nature of the relations between us. Poor old fellow, in his boundless gratitude I seemed more than human; and his praises actually shamed me to hear them. How I had first met them, he recounted in the strain of one assisted by the gods in classic times; his description made me a sort of Jove coming down on a rosy cloud to succor suffering humanity; and then came in Tintefleck with her broken words, marvellously aided by "action," as she poured forth the heap of gold upon the grass, and said it was all mine!

Wonderful metal, to be sure, for enforcing conviction on the mind of man; there is a sincerity about it far more impressive than any vocal persuasion. The very clink of it implies that the real and the positive are in question, not the imaginary and the delusive. "This is all his!" cried she, pointing to the treasure with the air of one showing Aladdin's cave; and though her speech was not very intelligible, Vaterchen's "vulgate" ran underneath and explained the text.

"I hope you will forgive me. I trust you will be satisfied with my apologies, made thus openly," said the Prince, in the most courteous of manners. "One who can behave with such magnanimity can scarcely be wanting in another species of generosity." And ere I could well reply, I found myself shaking hands with every one, and every one with me; nor was the least pleasurable part of this recognition

the satisfaction displayed by the Rittmeister at the good issue of this event. I had great difficulty in resisting their resolution to carry me back with them to Bregenz. Innumerable were the plans and projects devised for my entertainment. Field sports, sham fights, rifle-shooting, all were displayed attractively before me; and it was clear that, if I accepted their invitations, I should be treated like the most favored guest. But I was firm in my refusal; and, pleading a pretended necessity to be at a particular place by a particular day, I started once more, taking the road with the "vagabonds," who now seemed bound to me by an indissoluble bond; at least, so Vaterchen assured me by the most emphatic of declarations, and that, do with him what I might, he was my slave till death.

"Who is ever completely happy?" says the sage; and with too good reason is the doubt expressed. Here, one might suppose, was a situation abounding with the most pleasurable incidents. To have escaped a duel, and come out with honor and credit from the issue; to have re-found not only my missing money, but to have my suspicions relieved as to those whose honest name was dear to me, and whose discredit would have darkened many a bright hope of life, — these were no small successes; and yet — I shame to own it — my delight in them was dashed by an incident so small and insignificant that I have scarce courage to recall it. Here it is, however: While I was taking a kindly farewell of my military friends, hand-shaking and protesting interminable friendships, I saw, or thought I saw, the Prince, with even a more affectionate warmth, making his adieus to Tintefleck! If he had not his arm actually round her waist, there was certainly a white leather cavalry glove curiously attached to her side, and one of her cheeks was deeper colored than the other, and her bearing and manner seemed confused so that she answered, when spoken to, at cross-purposes.

"How did you come by this brooch, Tintefleck? I never saw it before."

"Oh, is it not pretty? It is a violet; and these leaves, though green, are all gold."

"Answer me, girl! who gave it thee?" said I, in the voice of Othello.

"Must I tell?" murmured she, sorrowfully.

"On the spot, — confess it!"

"It was one who bade me keep it till he should bring me a prettier one."

"I do not care for what he said, or what you promised. I want his name."

"And that I was never to forget him till then, — never."

"Do you say this to irritate and offend me, or do you prevaricate out of shame?" said, I angrily.

"Shame!" repeated she, haughtily.

"Ay, shame or fear."

"Or fear! Fear of what, or of whom?"

"You are very daring to ask me. And now, for the last time, Tintefleck, — for the last time, I say, who gave you this?"

As I said these words we had just reached the borders of a little rivulet, over which we were to cross by stepping-stones. Vaterchen was, as usual, some distance behind, and now calling to us to wait for him. She turned at his cry, and answered him, but made no reply to me.

This continued defiance of me overcame my temper altogether, sorely pushed as it was by a stupid jealousy, and, seizing her wrist with a strong grasp, I said, in a slow, measured tone, "I insist upon your answer to my question, or —"

"Or what?"

"That we part here, and forever."

"With all my heart. Only remember one thing," said she, in a low, whispering voice: "you left me once before, — you quitted me, in a moment of temper, just as you threaten it now. Go, if you will, or if you must; but let this be our last meeting and last parting."

"It is as such I mean it, — good-bye!" I sprang on the stepping-stone as I spoke, and at the same instant a glittering object splashed into the stream close to me. I saw it, just as one might see the lustre of a trout's back as it rose to a fly. I don't know what demon sat where my heart ought to have been, but I pressed my hat over my eyes, and went on without turning my head.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ON THE EDGE OF A TORRENT.

VERY conflicting and very mixed were my feelings, as I set forth alone. I had come well, very well, out of a trying emergency. I was neither driven to pretend I was something other than myself, with grand surroundings, and illustrious belongings, nor had I masqueraded under a feigned name and a false history; but as Potts, son of Potts the apothecary, I had carried my head high and borne myself creditably.

Magna est veritas, indeed! I am not so sure of the *prævalebit semper*, but, assuredly, where it does succeed, the success is wonderful.

Heaven knows into what tortuous entanglements might my passion for the "imaginative" — I liked this name for it — have led me, had I given way to one of my usual temptations. In more than one of my flights have I found myself carried up into a region, and have had to sustain an atmosphere very unsuited to my respiration, and now, with the mere prudence of walking on the *terra firma*, and treading the common highway of life, I found I had reached my goal safely and speedily. Flowers do not assume to be shrubs, nor shrubs affect to be forest trees; the limestone and granite never pretend that they are porphyry and onyx. Nature is real, and why should man alone be untruthful and unreal? If I liked these reflections, and tried to lose myself in them, it was in the hope of shutting out others less gratifying; but, do what I would, there, before me, arose the image of Catinka, as she stood at the edge of the rivulet, that stream which seemed to cut me off from one portion of my life, and make the past irrevocably gone forever.

I am certain I was quite right in parting with that girl. Any respectable man, a father of a family, would have applauded me for severing this dangerous connection. What could come of such association except unhappiness? "Potts," would the biographer say, — "Potts saw, with the unerring instinct of his quick perception, that this young creature would one day or other have laid at his feet the burnt-offering of her heart, and then, what could he have done? If Potts had been less endowed with genius, or less armed in honesty, he had not anticipated this peril, or, foreseeing, had undervalued it. But he both saw and feared it. How very differently had a libertine reasoned out this situation!" And then I thought how wicked I might have been, — a monster of crime and atrocity. Every one knows the sensation of lying snugly a-bed on a stormy night, and, as the rain plashes and the wind howls, drawing more closely around him the coverlet, and the selfish satisfaction of his own comfort, heightened by all the possible hardships of others outside. In the same benevolent spirit, but not by any means so reprehensible, is it pleasant to imagine oneself a great criminal, standing in the dock, to be stared at by a horror-struck public, photographed, shaved, prison costumed, exhorted, sentenced, and then, just as the last hammer has driven the last nail into the scaffold, and the great bell has tolled out, to find that you are sitting by your wood fire, with your curtain drawn, your uncut volume beside you, and your peculiar weakness, be it tea, or sherry-cobbler, at your elbow. I constantly take a "rise" out of myself in this fashion, and rarely a week goes over that I have not either poisoned a sister or had a shot at the Queen. It is a sort of intellectual Russian bath, in which the luxury consists in the exaggerated alternative between being scalded first and rolled in the snow afterwards. It was in this figurative snow I was now disporting myself, pleasantly and refreshingly, and yet remorse, like a sturdy dun, stood at my gate, and refused to go away.

Had I, indeed, treated her harshly, — had I rejected the offer of her young and innocent heart? Very puzzling and embarrassing question this, and especially to a man who had nothing of the coxcomb in his nature, none of that prompt-

ing of self-love that would suggest a vain reply. I felt that it was very natural *she* should have been struck by the attractive features of my character, but I felt this without a particle of conceit. I even experienced a sense of sorrow as I thought over it, just as a conscientious siren might have regretted that nature had endowed her with such a charming voice; and this duty — for it was a duty — discharged, I bethought me of my own future. I had a mission, which was to see Kate Herbert and give her Miss Crofton's letter. In doing so, I must needs throw off all disguises and mockeries, and be Potts, the very creature she sneered at, the man whose mere name was enough to suggest a vulgar life and a snob's nature! No matter what misery it may give, I will do it manfully. *She* may never appreciate — the world at large may never appreciate — what noble motives were hidden beneath these assumed natures, mere costumes as they were, to impart more vigor and persuasiveness to sentiments which, uttered in the undress of Potts, would have carried no convictions with them. Play Macbeth in a paletot, perform Othello in "pegtops," and see what effect you will produce! Well, my pretended station and rank were the mere gauds and properties that gave force to my opinions. And now to relinquish these, and be the actor, in the garish light of the noonday, and a shabby-genteel coat and hat! "I will do it," muttered I, — "I will do it, but the suffering will be intense!" When the prisoner sentenced to a long captivity is no more addressed by his name, but simply called No. 18, or 43, it is said that the shock seems to kill the sense of identity with him, and that nothing more tends to that stolid air of indifference, that hopeless inactivity of feature, so characteristic of a prison life; in the very same way am I affected when limited to my Potts nature, and condemned to confine myself within the narrow bounds of that one small identity. From what Prince Max has said at the *table d'hôte* at Bregenz, it was clear that Mrs. Keats had already learned I was not the young prince of the House of Orleans; but, in being disabused of one error, she seemed to have fallen into another; and it behoved me to explain that I was not a rope-dancer or a mountebank. "She, too, shall know me in my

Potts nature," said I; "she also shall recognize me in the 'majesty of myself.'" I was not very sure of what that was, but found it in Hegel.

And when I have completed this task, I will throw myself like a waif upon the waters of life. I will be that which the moment or the event shall make me, — neither trammelled by the past nor awed by the future. I will take the world as the drama of a day. Were men to do this, what breadth and generosity would it impart to them! It is in self-seeking and advancement that we narrow our faculties and imprison our natures. A man fancies he owns a palace and a demesne, but it is the palace that owns *him*, obliges him to maintain a certain state, live in a certain style, surrounded with certain observances, not one of which may be, perhaps, native to him. It is the poor man, who comes to visit and gaze on his splendors, who really enjoys them; *he* sees them without one detracting influence, — not to say that in *his* heart are no corroding jealousies of some other rich man, who has a finer Claude, or a grander Rubens. Instead, besides, of owning one palace and one garden, it is the universe he owns: the vast savannah is his race-ground; Niagara his own private cascade. My heart bounded with these buoyant fancies, and I stepped out briskly on my road. Now that I had made this vow of poverty to myself, I felt very light-hearted and gay. So long as a man is struggling for place and pre-eminence in life, how can he be generous, how even gracious? "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's ox," says the commandment, but surely it must have been your neighbor's before it was yours, and if you have striven for it, it is likely that you have coveted it. Now, I will covet nothing, — positively nothing, — and I will see if in this noble spirit there will not be a reward proportionately ample and splendid.

My road led through that wild and somewhat dreary valley by which the Upper Rhine descends, fed by many an Alpine stream and torrent, to reach the fertile plains of Germany. It was a desolate expanse of shingle, with here and there little patches of oak scrub, or, at rare intervals, small enclosures of tillage, though how tilled, or for whom, it was hard to say, since not a trace of inhabitant could be seen,

far or wide. Deep fissures, the course of many a mountain stream, cut the road at places, and through these the foot traveller had to pass on stepping-stones; while wheel carriages, descending into the chaos of rocks and stones, fared even worse, and incurred serious peril to spring and axle in the passage. On the mountain-sides, indeed, some chalets were to be seen, very high up, and scarcely accessible, but ever surrounded with little tracts of greener verdure and more varied foliage. From these heights, too, I could hear the melodious ring of the bells worn by the cattle, — sure signs of peasant comfort. “Might not a man find a life of simple cares and few sorrows, up yonder?” asked I, as I gazed upward. While I continued to look, the great floating clouds that soared on the mountain-top began to mass and to mingle together, thickening and darkening at every moment, and then, as though overweighted, slowly to descend, shutting out chalet and shady copse and crag, as they fell, on their way to the plain beneath. It was a grievous change from the bright picture a few moments back, and not the less disheartening, that the heavily charged mist now melted into rain, that soon fell in torrents. With not a rock nor a shrub to shelter under, I had nothing for it but to trudge onward to the nearest village, wherever that might be. How speedily the slightest touch of the real will chase away the fictitious and imaginary! No more dreams nor fancies now, as wet and soaked I plodded on, my knapsack seeming double its true weight, and my stick appearing to take root each time it struck the ground. The fog, too, was so dense that I was forced to feel my way as I went. The dull roar of the Rhine was the only sound for a long time; but this, at length, became broken by the crashing noise of timber carried down by the torrents, and the louder din of the torrents themselves as they came tumbling down the mountain. I would have retraced my steps to Bregenz, but that I knew the places I had passed dryshod in the morning would by this time have become impassable rivers. My situation was a dreary one, and not without peril, since there was no saying when or where a mountain cataract might not burst its way down the cliffs and sweep clean across the road towards the Rhine.

Had there been one spot to offer shelter, even the poorest and meanest, I would gladly have taken it, and made up my mind to await better weather; but there was not a bank, nor even a bush to cower under, and I was forced to trudge on. It seemed to me, at last, that I must have been walking many hours; but having no watch, and being surrounded with impenetrable fog, I could make no guess of the time, when, at length, a louder and deeper sound appeared to fill the air, and make the very mist vibrate with its din. The surging sound of a great volume of water, sweeping along through rocks and fallen trees, apprised me that I was nearing a torrent; while the road itself, covered with some inches of water, showed that the stream had already risen above its embankments. There was real danger in this; light carriages — the great lumbering diligence itself — had been known to be carried away by these suddenly swollen streams, and I began seriously to fear disaster. Wading cautiously onward, I reached what I judged to be the edge of the torrent, and felt with my stick that the water was here borne madly onward, and at considerable depth. Though through the fog I could make out the opposite bank, and see that the stream was not a wide one, I plainly perceived that the current was far too powerful for me to breast without assistance, and that no single passenger could attempt it with safety. I may have stood half an hour thus, with the muddy stream surging over my ankles, for I was stunned and stupefied by the danger, when I thought I saw through the mist two gigantic figures looming through the fog, on the opposite bank. When and how they had come there, I knew not, if they were indeed there, and if these figures were not mere spectres of my imagination. It was not till having closed my eyes, and opening them again, I beheld the same objects, that I could fully assure myself of their reality.

CHAPTER XL.

I AM DRAGGED AS A PRISONER TO FELDKIRCH.

THE two great figures I had seen looming through the fog while standing in the stream, I at last made out to be two horsemen, who seemed in search of some safe and fordable part of the stream to cross over. Their apparent caution was a lesson by which I determined to profit, and I stood a patient observer of their proceedings. At times I could catch their voices, but without distinguishing what they said, and suddenly I heard a plunge, and saw that one had dashed boldly into the flood, and was quickly followed by the other. If the stream did not reach to their knees, as they sat, it was yet so powerful that it tested all the strength of the horses and all the skill of the riders to stem it; and as the water splashed and surged, and as the animals plunged and struggled, I scarcely knew whether they were fated to reach the bank, or be carried down in the current. As they gained about the middle of the stream, I saw that they were mounted gendarmes, heavy men with heavy equipments, favorable enough to stem the tide, but hopelessly incapable to save themselves if overturned. "Go back, — hold in, — go back! the water is far deeper here!" I cried out at the top of my voice; but either not hearing, or not heeding my warning, on they came, and, as I spoke, one plunged forward and went headlong down under the water, but, rising immediately, his horse struck boldly out, and, after a few struggles, gained the bank. The other, more fortunate, had headed up the stream, and reached the shore without difficulty.

With the natural prompting of a man towards those who had just overcome a great peril, I hastened to say how glad I felt at their safety, and from what intense fear their land-

ing had rescued me; when one, a corporal, as his cuff bespoke, muttered a coarse exclamation of impatience, and something like a malediction on the service that exposed men to such hazards, and at the same instant the other dashed boldly up the bank, and with a bound placed his horse at my side, as though to cut off my retreat.

"Who are you?" cried the corporal to me, in a stern voice.

"A traveller," said I, trying to look majestic and indignant.

"So I see; and of what nation?"

"Of that nation which no man insults with impunity."

"Russia?"

"No; certainly not, — England."

"Whence from last?"

"From Bregenz."

"And from Constance by Lindau?" asked he quickly, as he read from a slip of paper he had just drawn from his belt.

I assented, but not without certain misgivings, as I saw so much was known as to my movements.

"Now for your passport. Let me see it," said the corporal again. "Just so," said he, folding it up. "Traveling on foot, and marked 'suspected.'"

Though he muttered these words to his companion, I perceived that he cared very little for my having overheard them.

"Suspected of what, or by whom?" asked I, angrily.

Instead of paying any attention to my question, the two men now conversed together in a low tone and confidentially.

"Come," said I, with an assumed boldness, "if you have quite done with that passport of mine, give it to me, and let me pursue my journey."

So eager were they in their own converse, that this speech, too, was unheeded; and now, grown rasher by impunity and impatience, I stepped stoutly forward, and attempted to take the passport from the soldier's hand.

"Sturm und Gewitter!" swore out the fellow, while he struck me sharply on the wrist, "do you mean to try force

with us?" And the other drew his sabre, and, flourishing it over his head, held the point of it within a few inches of my chest.

I cannot imagine whence came the courage that now filled my heart, for I know I am not naturally brave, but I felt for an instant that I could have stormed a breach; and, with an insulting laugh, I said, "Oh, of course, cut me down. I am unarmed and defenceless. It is an admirable opportunity for the display of Austrian chivalry."

"Bey'm Henker! It's very hard not to slice off his ear," said the soldier, seeming to ask leave for this act of valor.

"Get out your cords," said the corporal; "we're losing too much time here."

"Am I a prisoner, then?" asked I, in some trepidation.

"I suspect you are, and likely to be for some time to come," was the gruff answer.

"On what charge — what is alleged against me?" cried I, passionately.

"What has sent many a better-looking fellow to Spielberg," was the haughty rejoinder.

"If I am your prisoner," said I, haughtily, — "and I warn you at once of your peril in daring to arrest a British subject travelling peacefully — You are not going to tie my hands! You are not going to treat me as a felon?" I screamed out these words in a voice of wildest passion, as the soldier, who had dismounted for the purpose, was now proceeding to tie my wrists together with a stout cord, and in a manner that displayed very little concern for the pain he occasioned me.

As escape was totally out of the question, I threw myself upon the last resource of the injured. I fell back upon eloquence. I really wish I could remember even faintly the outline of my discourse; for though not by any means a fluent German, the indignation that makes men poets converted me into a greater master of prose, and I told them a vast number of curious, but not complimentary, traits of the land they belonged to. I gave, too, a rapid historical sketch of their campaigns against the French, showing how they were always beaten, the only novelty being whether they ran

away or capitulated. I reminded them that the victory over *me* would resound through Europe, being the only successful achievement of their arms for the last half-century. I expressed a fervent hope that the corporal would be decorated with the "Maria Theresa," and his companion obtain the "valor medal," for what they had done. Pensions, I hinted, were difficult in the present state of their finances, but rank and honor certainly ought to await them. I don't know at what exact period of my peroration it was that I was literally "pulled up," each of the horsemen holding a line fastened to my wrists, and giving me a drag forward that nearly carried me off my feet, and flat on my face. I stumbled, but recovered myself; and now saw that, bound as I was, with a gendarme on each side of me, it required all the activity I could muster, to keep my legs.

Another whispered conversation here took place across me, and I thought I heard the words Bregenz and Feldkirch interchanged, giving me to surmise that they were discussing to which place they should repair. My faint hope of returning to the former town was, however, soon extinguished, as the corporal, turning to me, said, "Our orders are to bring you alive to headquarters. We'll do our best; but if, in crossing these torrents, you prefer to be drowned, it's no fault of ours."

"Do you mean by that," cried I, "that I am to be dragged through the water in this fashion?"

"I mean that you are to come along as best you may."

"It is all worthy of you, quite worthy!" screamed I, in a voice of wildest rage. "You reserve all your bravery for those who cannot resist you, — and you are right, for they are your only successes. The Turks beat you" — here they chucked me close up, and dashed into the stream. "The Prussians beat you!" I was now up to my waist in water. "The Swiss beat you!" Down I went over head and ears. "The French always — thrashed you" — down again — "at Ulm — Auster — litz — Aspern" — nearly suffocated, I yelled out, "Wagram!" — and down I went, never to know any further consciousness till I felt myself lying on the soaked and muddy road, and heard a gruff voice saying, "Come along — we don't intend to pass the night here!"

CHAPTER XL.

THE ACT OF ACCUSATION.

BENUMBED, bedraggled, and bewildered, I entered Feldkirch late at night, my wrists cut with the cords, my clothes torn by frequent falls, my limbs aching with bruises, and my wet rags chafing my skin. No wonder was it that I was at once consigned from the charge of a jailer to the care of a doctor, and ere the day broke I was in a raging fever.

I would not, if I could, preserve any memory of that grievous interval. Happily for me, no clear traces remain on my mind, — pangs of suffering are so mingled with little details of the locality, faces, words, ludicrous images of a wandering intellect, long hours of silent brooding, sound of church bells, and such other tokens as cross the lives of busy men in the daily walk of life, all came and went within my brain, and still I lay there in fever.

In my first return of consciousness, I perceived I was the sole occupant of a long arched gallery, with a number of beds arranged along each side of it. In their uniform simplicity, and the severe air of the few articles of furniture, my old experiences at once recalled the hospital; not that I arrived at this conclusion without much labor and a considerable mental effort. It was a short journey, to be sure, but I was walking with sprained ankles. It was, however, a great joy and a great triumph to me to accomplish even this much. It was the recognition to myself that I was once more on the road to health, and again to feel the sympathies that make a brotherhood of this life of ours; and so happy was I with the prospect, that when I went to sleep at night my last thought was of the pleasure that morning would bring me. And I was not disappointed; the next day, and the

next, and several more that followed, were all passed in a calm and tranquil enjoyment. Looking back upon this period, I have often been disposed to imagine that when we lie in the convalescence that follows some severe illness, with no demands upon our bodily strength, no call made upon our muscular energies, the very activity of digestion not evoked, as our nourishment is of the simplest and lightest, our brain must of necessity exercise its functions more freely, untrammelled by passing cares or the worries incident to daily life, and that at such times our intellect has probably a more uncontested action than at any other period of our existence. I do not want to pursue my theory, or endeavor to sustain it; my reader has here enough to induce him to join his experience to my own, or reject the notion altogether.

I lay thus, not impatiently, for above a fortnight. I regained strength very slowly; the least effort or exertion was sure to overcome me. But I wished for none; and as I lay there, gazing for whole days long at a great coat-of-arms over the end of the gallery, where a huge double-headed eagle seemed to me screaming in the agony of strangulation, but yet never to be choked outright, I revelled in many a strange rambling as to the fate of the land of which it was the emblem and the shield. Doubtless some remnant of my passionate assault on Austria lingered in my brain, and gave this turn to its operations.

My nurse was one of that sisterhood whose charities call down many a blessing on the Church that organizes their benevolences. She was what is called a *graue Schwester*; and of a truth she seemed the incarnation of grayness. It was not her dress alone, but her face and hands, her noiseless gait, her undemonstrative stare, her half-husky whisper, and her monotonous ways, had all a sort of pervading grayness that enveloped her, just as a cloud mist wraps a landscape. There was, besides, a kind of fog-like indistinctness in her few and muttered words that made a fitting atmosphere of drowsy uniformity for the sick-room.

Her first care, on my recovery, was to supply me with a number of little religious books, — lives of saints and martyrs, accounts of miracles, and narratives of holy pilgrim-

ages, — and I devoured them with all the zest of a devotee. They seemed to supply the very excitement my mind craved for, and the good soul little suspected how much more she was ministering to a love for the marvellous than to a spirit of piety. In the "Flowers of St. Francis," for instance, I found an adventure-seeker after my own heart. To be sure, his search was after sinners in need of a helping hand to rescue them; but as his contests with Satan were described as stand-up encounters, with very hard knocks on each side, they were just as exciting combats to read of, as any I had ever perused in stories of chivalry.

Mistaking my zest for these readings for something far more praiseworthy, "the gray sister" enjoined me very seriously to turn from the evil advisers I had formerly consorted with, and frequent the society of better-minded and wiser men. Out of these counsels, dark and dim at first, but gradually growing clearer, I learned that I was regarded as a member of some terrible secret society, banded together for the direst and blackest of objects; the subversion of thrones, overthrow of dynasties, and assassination of sovereigns being all labors of love to us. She had a full catalogue of my colleagues, from Sand, who killed Kotzebue, to Orsini, and seemed thoroughly persuaded that I was a very advanced member of the order. It was only after a long time, and with great address on my part, that I obtained these revelations from her, and she owned that nothing but witnessing how the holy studies had influenced me would ever have induced her to make these avowals. As my convalescence progressed, and I was able to sit up for an hour or so in the day, she told me that I might very soon expect a visit from the Staats Procurator, a kind of district attorney-general, to examine me. So little able was I to carry my mind back to the bygone events of my life, that I heard this as a sort of vague hope that the inquiry would strike out some clew by which I could connect myself with the past, for I was sorely puzzled to learn what and who I had been before I came there. Was I a prosecutor or was I a prisoner? Never was a knotty point more patiently investigated, but, alas! most hopelessly. The intense interest of the inquiry, however, served totally to withdraw

me from my previous readings, and "the gray sister" was shocked to see the mark in my book remain for days long unchanged. She took courage at length to address me on the subject, and even went so far as to ask if Satan himself had not taken occasional opportunity of her absence to come and sit beside my bed? I eagerly caught at the suggestion, and said it was as she suspected: that he never gave me a moment's peace, now torturing me with menaces, now asking for explanations, how this could be reconciled with that, and why such a thing should not have prevented such another?

Instead of expressing any astonishment at my confession, she appeared to regard it as one of the most ordinary incidents, and referred me to my books, and especially to St. Francis, to see that these were usual and every-day snares in use. She went further, and in her zeal actually showed a sort of contempt for the Evil One in his intellectual capacity that startled me; showing how St. Jude always got the better of him, and that he was a mere child when opposed by the craft of St. Anthony of Pavia.

"It is the truth," said she, "always conquers him. Whenever, by any chance, he can catch you concealing or evading, trying to make out reasons that are inconsistent, or affecting intentions that you had not, then he is your master."

There was such an air of matter-of fact about all she said, that when — our first conversation on this theme over — she left the room, a cold sweat broke over me at the thought that my next visitor would be the "Lebendige Satan" himself.

It had come to this: that I had furnished my own mind with such a subject of terror that I could not endure to be alone, and lay there trembling at every noise, and shrinking at every shadow that crossed the floor. Many and many times, as the dupe of my own deceivings, did I find myself talking aloud in self-defence, averring that I wanted to be good and honest and faithful, and that whenever I lapsed from the right path, it was in moments of erring reason, sure to be followed after by sincere repentance.

It was after an access of this kind "the gray sister" found me one morning, bathed in cold perspiration, my eyes fixed, my lips livid, and my fingers fast knotted together.

"I see," said she, "he has given you a severe turn of it to-day. What was the temptation?"

For a long while I refused to answer; I was weak as well as irritable, and I desired peace; but she persisted, and pressed hard to know what subject we had been discussing together.

"I'll tell you, then," said I, fiercely, for a sudden thought, prompted perhaps by a sense of anger, flashed across me: "he has just told me that you are his sister."

She screamed out wildly, and rushing to the end of the gallery, threw herself at the foot of a little altar.

Satisfied with my vengeance, I lay back, and said no more. I may have dropped into a half-slumber afterwards, for I remember nothing till, just as evening began to fall, one of the servants came up and placed a table and two chairs beside my bed, with writing-materials and a large book, and shortly after, two men dressed in black, and with square black caps on their heads, took their places at the table, and conversed together in low whispers.

Resolving to treat them with a show of complete indifference, I turned away and pretended to go to sleep.

"The Herr Staats Procurator Schlüssel has come to read the act of accusation," said the shorter man, who seemed a subordinate; "take care that you pay proper respect to the law and the authorities."

"Let him read away," said I, with a wave of my hand; "I will listen."

In a low, sing-song, dreary tone, he began to recite the titles and dignities of the Emperor. I listened for a while; but as he got down to the Banat and Herzegovine, sleep overcame me, and I dozed away, waking up to hear him detailing what seemed his own greatness, how he was "Ober" this, and "Unter" that, till I fairly lost myself in the maze of his description. Judging from the monotonous, business-like persistence of his manner, that he had a long road before him, I wrapped myself comfortably in the bed-clothes, closed my eyes, and soon slept.

There were two candles burning on the table when I next opened my eyes, and my friend the procurator was reading away as before. I tried to interest myself for a second or

two; I rubbed my eyes, and endeavored to be wakeful; but I could not, and was fast settling down into my former state, when certain words struck on my ear and aroused me:

"The well-born Herr von Rigges further denounces the prisoner Harpar —"

"Read that again," cried I, aloud, "for I cannot clearly follow what you say."

"The well-born Herr von Rigges," repeated he, "'further denounces the prisoner Harpar as one of a sect banded together for the darkest purposes of revolution!'"

"Forgive my importunity, Herr Procurator," said I, in my most insinuating tone, "but in compassion for the weakness of faculties sorely tried by fever, will you tell me who is Rigges?"

"Who is Rigges? Is that your question?" said he, slowly.

"Yes, sir; that was my question."

He turned over several pages of his voluminous report, and proceeded to search for the passage he wanted.

"Here it is," said he, at last; and he read out: "'The so-called Rigges, being a well-born and not-the-less-from-a-mercantile-object-engaging pursuit highly-placed and much-honored subject of her Majesty the Queen of England, of the age of forty-two years and eight months, unmarried, and professing the Protestant religion.' Is that sufficient?"

"Quite so; and now, will you, with equal urbanity, inform me who is Harpar?"

"Who is Harpar? Who is Harpar? You surely do not ask me that?"

"I do; such is my question."

"I must confess that you surprise me. You ask me for information about yourself!"

"Oh, indeed! So that I am Harpar?"

"You can, of course, deny it. We are in a measure prepared for that. The proofs of your identity will be, however, forthcoming; not to add that it will be difficult to disprove the offence."

"Ha, the offence! I'm really curious about that. What is the offence with which I am charged?"

"What I have been reading these two hours. What I

have recited with all the clearness, brevity, and perspicuity that characterize our imperial and royal legislation, making our code at once the envy and admiration of all Europe."

"I'm sure of that. But what have I done?"

"With what for a dulness-charged and much-beclouded intellect are you afflicted," cried he, "not to have followed the greatly-by-circumstances-corroborated, and in-various-ways-by-proofs-brought-home narrative that I have already read out."

"I have not heard one word of it!"

"What a deplorable and all-the-more-therefore-hopeless intelligence is yours! I will begin it once more." And with a heavy sigh he turned over the first pages of his manuscript.

"Nay, Herr Procurator," interposed I, hastily. "I have the less claim to exact this sacrifice on your part, that even when you have rendered it, it will be all fruitless and unprofitable. I am just recovering from a severe illness. I am, as you have very acutely remarked, a man of very narrow and limited faculties in my best of moments, and I am now still lower in the scale of intelligence. Were you to read that lucid document till we were both gray-headed, it would leave me just as uninformed as to imputed crime as I now am."

"I perceive," said he, gravely. Then, turning to his clerk, he bade him write down, "'And the so-called Harpar, having duly heard and with decorously-lent attention listened to the foregoing act, did thereupon enter his plea of mental incapacity and derangement.'"

"Nay, Herr Procurator, I would simply record that, however open to follow some plain narrative, the forms and subtleties of a legal document only bewilder me."

"What for an ingeniously-worded and with-artifice-cunningly-conceived excuse have we here?" exclaimed he, indignantly. "Is it from England, with her seventeen hundred and odd volumes of an incomplete code, that the Imperial and Royal Government is to learn legislation? You are charged with offences that are known to every state of civilization: highway assault and molestation; attack with arms and deadly implements, stimulated by base and long-

heretofore and with-bitterness-imagined plans of vengeance on your countryman and former associate, the so-named Rigges. From him, too, proceeds the information as to your political character, and the ever-to-be deplored and only-with-blood-expiated error of republicanism by which you are actuated. This brief, but not-the-less-on-that-account lucid exposition, it is my duty first to read out, and then leave with you. With all your from-a-wrong-impulse-proceeding and a-spirit-of-opposition-suggested objections, I have no wish nor duty to meddle. The benign and ever paternal rule under which we live gives even to the most-with-accusation-surrounded, and with-strong-presumption-implicated prisoner, every facility of defence. Having read and matured this indictment, you will, after a week, make choice of an advocate."

"Am I to be confronted with my accuser?"

"I sincerely hope that the indecent spectacle of insulting attack and offensive rejoinder thus suggested is unknown to the administration of our law."

"How, then, can you be certain that I am the man he accuses of having molested him?"

"You are not here to assail, nor I to defend, the with-ages-consolidated and by-much-tact-accumulated wisdom of our Imperial and Royal Code."

"Might he not say, when he saw me, 'I never set eyes on this man before'?"

He turned again to his clerk, and dictated something of which I could but catch the concluding words, "And thereby imputing perjury to the so-called Rigges."

It was all I could do to repress an outburst of anger at this unjustifiable system of inference, but I did restrain myself, and merely said, "I impute nothing, Herr Procurator; I simply suggest a possible case, that everything suffered by Rigges was inflicted by some other than I."

"If you had accomplices, name them," said he, solemnly.

This overcame all my prudent resolves. I was nowise prepared for such a perversity of misconception, and, losing all patience and all respect for his authority, I burst out into a most intemperate attack on Austria, her code, her system, her ignorant indifference to all European enlighten-

ment, her bigoted adherence to forms either unmeaning or pernicious, winding up all with a pleasant prediction that in a few short years the world would have seen the last of this stolid and unteachable empire.

Instead of deigning a reply, he merely bent down to the table, and I saw by the movement of his lips, and the rapid course of the clerk's pen, that my statement was being reduced to writing.

"When you have completed that," said I, gravely, "I have some further observations to record."

"In a moment, — in a moment," patiently responded the procurator; "we have only got to 'the besotted stupidity of her pretentious officials.'"

The calm quietude of his manner, as he said this, threw me into a fit of laughter which lasted several minutes.

"There, there," said I, "that will do; I will keep the remainder of my remarks for another time and place."

"Reserving to himself," dictated he, "'the right of uttering still more bitter and untruthful comments on a future occasion.'" And the clerk wrote the words as he spoke them.

"You will sign this here," said he, presenting me with the pen.

"Nothing of the kind, Herr Procurator. I will not lend myself to any, even the most ordinary, form of your stupid system."

"And refuses to sign the foregoing," dictated he, in the same unmoved voice. This done, he arose, and proceeded to draw on his gloves. "The act of allegation I now commit to your hands," said he, calmly, "and you will have a week to reflect upon the course you desire to adopt."

"One question before you go: Is the person called Rigges here at this moment, and can I see him?"

He consulted for a few seconds with his subordinate, and then replied, "These questions we are of opinion are irrelevant to the defence, and need not be answered."

"I only ask you, as a favor, Herr Procurator," said I.

"The law recognizes no favors, nor accepts courtesies."

"Does it also reject common sense? — is it deaf to all intelligence? — is it indifferent to every appeal to reason? — is it dead to —"

But he would not wait for more, and having saluted me thrice profoundly, retired from the gallery and left me alone with my indignation.

The great pile of paper still lay on the table next me, and in my anger I hurled it from me to the middle of the room, venting I know not what passionate wrath at the same time on everything German. "This the land of primitive simplicity and patriarchal virtues, forsooth! This the country of elevated tastes and generous instincts! Why, it is all Bureau and Barrack!" I went on for a long time in this strain, and I felt the better for it. The operative surgeons tell us that no men recover so certainly or so speedily after great operations as the fellows who scream out and make a terrible uproar. It is your patient, self-controlling creature who sinks under the suffering he will not confess; and I am confident that it is a wise practice to blow off the steam of one's indignation, and say all the most bitter things one can think of in moments of disappointment, and, so to say, prepare the chambers of your mind for the reception of better company.

After a while I got up, gathered the papers together, and prepared to read them. Legal amplifications and circumlocutions are of all lands and peoples; but for the triumph of this diffusiveness commend me to the Germans. To such an extent was this the case, that I reached the eighth page of the precious paper before I got finally out of the titular description of the vice-governor in whose district the event was laid. Armed, however, with heroic resolution, I persevered, and read on through the entire night, — I will not say without occasional refreshers in the shape of short naps; but the day was already breaking when I turned over the last page, and read the concluding little blessing on the Emperor, under whose benign reign all the good was encouraged, all evil punished, and the Hoch-gelehrter — Hoch wohl-geborner Herr der Hofrath, Ober Procurators-fiscal-Secretär, charged with the due execution of the present decree.

In the language of *précis* writing, the event might be stated thus: "A certain Englishman named Rigges, travelling by post, arrived at the torrent of Dornbirn a short time

before noon, and while waiting there for the arrival of some peasants to accompany his carriage through the stream, was joined by a foot-traveller, by whom he was speedily recognized. Whatever the nature of the relations previously subsisting between them, — and it may be presumed they were not of the most amiable, — no sooner had they exchanged glances than they engaged in deadly conflict. Rigges was well armed; the stranger had no weapon whatever, but was a man of surpassing strength, for he tore the door of the carriage from its hinges, and dragged Rigges out upon the road before the other could offer any resistance. The postilion, who had gone to summon the peasants, was speedily recalled by the report of firearms; three shots were fired in rapid succession, and when he reached the spot it was to see two men struggling violently in the torrent, the stranger dragging Rigges with all his might towards the middle of the stream, and the other screaming wildly for succor. The conflict was a terrible one, for the foot-traveller seemed determined on self-destruction, if he could only involve the other in his own fate. At last Rigges' strength gave way, and the other threw himself upon him, and they both went down beneath the water.

“The stranger emerged in an instant, but one of the peasants on the bank struck him a violent blow with his ash pole, and he fell back into the stream. Meanwhile the others had rescued Rigges, who lay panting, but unconscious, on the ground. They were yet ministering to his recovery, when they heard a wild shout of derisive triumph, and now saw that the other, though carried away by the torrent, had gained a small shingly bank in the middle of the Rhine, and was waving his hat in mockery of them. They were too much occupied with the care of the wounded man, however, to bestow more attention on him. One of Rigges' arms was badly fractured, and his jaw also broken, while he complained still more of the pain of some internal injuries; so severe, indeed, were his sufferings, that he had to be carried on a litter to Feldkirch. His first care on arriving was to denounce the assailant, whose name he gave as Harpar, declaring him to be a most notorious member of a ‘Rouge’ society, and one whose capture was an object of European

interest. In fact, Rigges went so far as to pretend that he had himself perilled life in the attempt to secure him.

"Detachments of mounted gendarmes were immediately sent off in pursuit, the order being to arrest any foot-traveller whose suspicious appearance might challenge scrutiny."

It is needless to say how much I appeared to fulfil the signs they sought for, not to add that the intemperance of my language, when captured, was in itself sufficient to establish a grave charge against me. It is true, there was in the act of allegation a lengthened description of me, with which my own appearance but ill corresponded. I was described as of middle age, of a strong frame and muscular habit, and with an expression that denoted energy and fierceness. How much of that vigor must they imagine had been washed away by the torrent, to leave me the poor helpless-looking thing I now appeared!

I know it is a very weak confession,—I feel as I make it how damaging to my character is the acknowledgment, and how seriously I compromise myself in my reader's estimation; but I cannot help owning that I felt very proud to be thought so wicked, to be classed with those Brutuses of modern history, who were scattering explosive shells like bonbons, and throwing grenades broadcast like "confetti" in a carnival. I fancied how that miserable Staats Procurator must have trembled in his inmost heart as he sat there in close proximity with such an infuriate desperado as I was. I hoped that every look, every gesture, every word of mine, struck terror into his abject soul. It must also unquestionably do them good, these besotted, self-satisfied, narrow-minded Germans, to learn how an Englishman, a born Briton, regards their miserable system of government, and that poor and meagre phantasm they call their "civilization." Well, they have had their opportunity now, and I hope they will make much of it.

As I pondered over the late incident, as recorded in the allegation, I remembered the name of Rigges as that of the man Harpar mentioned as having "run" or escaped with their joint finances, and had very little difficulty in filling up the probable circumstances of their rencontre. It was

easy to see how Rigges, travelling "extra-post," with all the appearance of wealth and station, could impute to the poor wayfarer any criminality he pleased. Cunningly enough, too, he had hit upon the precise imputation which was sure to enlist Austrian sympathies in the pursuit, and calling him a "Socialist and a Rouge" was almost sealing his fate at once. How glad I felt that the poor fellow had escaped, even though it cost me all the penalty of personating him; yes, I really was generous enough for that sentiment, though I perceive that my reader smiles incredulously as I declare it. "No, no," mutters he, "the arrant snob must not try to impose upon us in that fashion. He was trembling to the very marrow of his bones, and nothing was further from his thoughts than self-sacrifice or devotion." I know your opinion of me takes this lively shape; I feel it, and I shrink under it; but I know, besides, that I owe all this depreciating estimate of me to nothing so much as my own frankness and candor. If my reader, therefore, scruples to accord me the merit of the generosity that I lay claim to, let him revel in the depreciating confession that I am about to make. I knew that when it was discovered I was not Harpar, I must instantly be set at liberty. I felt this, and could, therefore, be at any moment the arbiter of my own freedom. To do this, of course, would set in motion a search after the real delinquent, and I determined I would keep my secret till he had ample time to get away. When I had satisfied myself that all pursuit of him must be hopeless, I would declare myself to be Potts, and proudly demand my liberation.

My convalescence made now such progress that I was able to walk about the gallery, and indeed occasionally to stroll out upon a long terrace which flanked the entire building, and gaze upon a garden. beyond which again I could see the town of Feldkirch and the open Platz in which the weekly market was held. By the recurrence of these — they always fell upon a Saturday — was I enabled to mark time, and I now reckoned that three weeks had gone over since the day of the Herr Procurator's visit, and yet I had heard nothing more of him, nor of the accusation against me. I was seriously thinking whether my wisest plan might not be

to take French leave and walk off, when my jailer came one morning to announce that I was to be transferred to Innspruck, where, in due course, my trial would take place.

"What if I refuse to go?" said I; "what if I demand my liberation here on the spot?"

"I don't imagine that you'd delay your journey much by that, my good friend," said he; "the Imperial and Royal Government takes little heed of foolish remonstrances."

"What if the Imperial and Royal Government, in the plenitude of its sagacity, should be in the wrong? What if I be not the person who is accused of this crime? What if the real man be now at liberty? What if the accuser himself will declare, when he sees me, that he never met me before, nor so much as heard of me?"

"Well, all that may happen; I won't say it is impossible, but it cannot occur here, for the Herr von Riggas has already set off for Innspruck, and you are to follow him to-morrow."

CHAPTER XLII.

A GLIMPSE OF AN OLD FRIEND.

If there be anything in our English habits upon which no difference of opinion can exist, it is our proneness to extend to a foreigner a degree of sympathy and an amount of interest that we obstinately deny to our own people. The English artist struggling all but hopelessly against the town's indifference has but to displace the consonants or multiply the vowels of his name to be a fashion with it and a success. Strange and incomprehensible tendency in a nation so overwhelmingly impressed with a sense of its own vast superiority! But so it is. Mr. Brady may sing to empty benches, while il Signor Bradini would "bring down the house." What set me thinking over this was, that though Silvio Pellico was a stock theme for English pity and compassion, I very much doubted if a single tear would fall for the misfortunes of Potts. And yet there was a marvellous similarity in our suffering. In each case was the Austrian the jailer; in each case was the victim a creature of tender mould and gentle nature.

I travelled in a sort of covered cart, with a mounted gendarme at either side of me. Indeed, the one faintly alleviating circumstance of my captivity was the sight of those two heavily equipped giants, armed to the teeth, who were supposed to be essential to my safe conduct. It was such an acknowledgment of what they had to apprehend from my well-known prowess and daring, so palpable a confession that every precaution was necessary against the bold intrepidity of a man of my stamp! At times, I almost wished they had put chains upon me. I thought how well it would read in my Memoirs; how I was heavily "manacled," — a great word that, — "orders being given to the escort to

shoot me if I showed the slightest intention to escape." It was an intense pleasure to me to imagine myself a sort of Nana Sahib, and whenever we halted at some wayside public, and the idle loungers would draw aside the canvas covering and stare in at me, I did my utmost to call up an expression of ogre-like ferocity and wildness, and it was with a thrill of ecstasy I saw a little child clasp its mother by the neck, and scream out to come away as it beheld me.

On the second night of our journey we halted at a little village at the foot of the Arlberg, called Steuben, where, in default of a regular prison, they lodged me in an old tower, the lower part of which was used for a stable. It stood in the very centre of the town, and from its narrow and barred windows I could catch glimpses of the little world that moved about in happy freedom beneath me. I could see the Marktplatz, from which the booths were now being taken down, and could mark that preparations for some approaching ceremony were going on, but of what nature I could not guess. A large place was neatly swept out, and at last strewn with sawdust, — signs unerring of some exhibition of legerdemain or conjuring, of which the Tyrolese are warm admirers. The arrangements were somewhat more portentous than are usually observed in open-air representations, for I saw seats prepared for the dignitaries of the village, and an evident design to mark the entertainment as under the most distinguished protection. The crowd — now considerable — observed all the decorous bearing of citizens in presence of their authorities.

I nestled myself snugly in the deep recess of the window to watch the proceedings, nor had I long to wait; some half-dozen gayly dressed individuals having now pierced their way through the throng, and commenced those peculiar gambols which bespeak backbones of gristle and legs of pasteboard. It is a class of performance I enjoy vastly. The two fellows who lap over each other like the links of a chain, and the creature who rolls himself about like a ball, and the licensed freedoms of that man of the world — the clown — never weary me, and I believe I laugh at them with all the more zest that I have so often laughed at them before. It was plain, after a while, that a more brilliant

part of the spectacle was yet to come, for a large bluff-looking man, in cocked-hat and jack-boots, now entered the ring and indignantly ejected the clowns by sundry admonitions with a lash-whip, which I perceived were not merely make-believes.

"Ah, here he comes! here he is!" was now uttered in accents of eager interest, and an avenue was quickly made through the crowd for the new performer. There was delay after this; and though doubtless the crowd below could satisfy their curiosity, I was so highly perched and so straitened in my embrasure that I had to wait, with what patience I might, the new arrival. I was deep in my guesses what sort of "artist" he might prove, when I saw the head of a horse peering over the shoulders of the audience, and then the entire figure of the quadruped as he emerged into the circle, all sheeted and shrouded from gaze. With one dexterous sweep the groom removed all the clothing, and there stood before me my own lost treasure, — Blondel himself! I would have known him among ten thousand. He was thinner, perhaps, certainly thinner, but in all other respects the same; his silky mane and his long tassel of a tail hung just as gracefully as of yore, and, as he ambled round, he moved his head with a courteous inclination, as though to acknowledge the plaudits he met with.

There was in his air the dignity that said, "I am one who has seen better days. It was not always thus with me. Applaud if you must, and if you will; but remember that I accept your plaudits with reserve, perhaps even with reluctance." Poor fellow, my heart bled for him! I felt as though I saw a cathedral canon cutting somersaults, and all this while, by some strange inconsistency, I had not a sympathy to bestow on the human actors in the scene. "As for them," thought I, "they have accepted this degradation of their own free will. If they had not shirked honest labor, they need never have been clowns or pantaloons; but Blondel — Blondel, whom fate had stamped as the palfrey of some high-born maiden, or, at least, the favorite steed of one who would know how to lavish care on an object of such perfection — Blondel, who had borne himself so proudly in high places, and who, even in his declining fortunes,

had been the friend and fellow-traveller of — Yes, why should I shame to say it? Posterity will speak of Potts without the detracting malice and envious rancor of contemporaries; and when, in some future age, a great philanthropist or statesman should claim the credit of some marvellous discovery, some wondrous secret by which humanity may be bettered, a learned critic will tell the world how this great invention was evidently known to Potts, how at such a line or such a page we shall find that Potts knew it all."

The wild cheering of the crowd beneath cut short these speculations, and now I saw Blondel cantering gayly round the circle, with a handkerchief in his mouth. If in sportive levity it chanced to fall, he would instantly wheel about and seize it, and then, whisking his tail and shaking his long forelock, resume his course again. It was fine, too, to mark the haughty indifference he manifested towards that whip-cracking monster who stood in the centre, and affected to direct his motions. Not alone did he reject his suggestions, but in a spirit of round defiance did he canter up behind him, and alight with his forelegs on the fellow's shoulders. I am not sure whether the spectators regarded the tableau as I did, but to *me* it seemed an allegorical representation of man and his master.

The hard breathing of a person close behind me now made me turn my head, and I saw the jailer, who had come with my supper. A thought flashed suddenly across me. "Go down to those mountebanks, and ask if they will sell that cream-colored pony," said I. "Bargain as though you wanted him for yourself; he is old and of little value, and you may, perhaps, secure him for eighty or ninety florins; and if so, you shall have ten more for your pains. It is a caprice of mine, nothing more, but help me to gratify it."

He heard me with evident astonishment, and then gravely asked if I had forgotten the circumstance that I was a prisoner, and likely to remain so for some time.

"Do as I bade you," said I, "and leave the result to me. There, lose no more time about it, for I see the performance is drawing to a close."

"Nay, nay," said he; "the best of all is yet to come."

The pretty Moorish girl has not yet appeared. Ha! here she is."

As he spoke, he crept up into the window beside me, not less eager for the spectacle than myself. A vigorous cheer, and a loud clapping of hands below announced that the favorite was in sight long before she was visible to our eyes.

"What can she do?" asked I, peevishly, perhaps, for I was provoked how completely she had eclipsed poor Blondel in public favor. "What can she do? Is she a rope-dancer, or does she ride in the games of the ring?"

"There, there! Look at her; yonder she goes! and there's the young Prince—they call him a Prince, at least—who follows her everywhere."

I could not but smile at the poor jailer's simplicity, and would willingly have explained to him that we have outlived the age of Cinderellas. Indeed, I had half turned towards him with this object, when a perfect roar of the crowd beneath me drew off my attention from him to what was going on below. I soon saw what it was that entranced the public: it was the young girl, who now, standing on Blondel's back, was careering round the circle at full speed. It is an exercise in which neither the horse nor the rider is seen to advantage; the heavy monotonous tramp of the beast, cramped by the narrow limits, becomes a stilty, wooden gallop. The rider, too, more careful of her balance than intent upon graceful action, restricts herself to a few, and by no means picturesque attitudes. With all this, the girl now before me seemed herself so intensely to enter into the enjoyment of the scene, that all her gestures sprang out of a sort of irrepressible delight. Far from unsteady her foot, or limiting her action, the speed of the horse appeared to assist the changeful bendings of her graceful figure, as now, dropping on one knee, she would lean over to caress him, or now, standing erect, with folded arms and leg advanced, appeared to dare him to displace her. Faultlessly graceful as she was, there was that in her own evident enjoyment that imparted a strange delight to the beholder, and gave to the spectacle the sort of magnetism by which pleasure finds its way from heart to heart through-

out a multitude. At least, I suppose this must have been so, for in the joyous cheering of that crowd there was a ring of wild delight far different from mere applause.

At last, poor Blondel, blown and wearied, turned abruptly into the middle of the ring, and with panting sides and shaking tail came to a dead halt. The girl, with a graceful slide seated herself on his back and patted him playfully. And to me this was by far the most graceful movement of the whole.

It was really a picture! and so natural and so easy withal, that one forgot all about her spangles and tinsel, the golden fillet of her hair, and the tawdry fringe of her sandals; and, what was even harder still, heard not the hoarse-mouthed enthusiasm that greeted her. At length, a tall man, well-dressed and of striking appearance, pushed his way into the ring, and politely presented her with a bouquet, at which piece of courtesy the audience, noways jealous, again redoubled their applause. She now looked round her with an air of triumphant pleasure, and while, with a playful gesture, she flung back the ringlets on her neck, she lifted her face full to my view, and it was Tintefleck! With all my might I cried out, "Catinka! Catinka!" I know not why, but the impulse never waited to argue the question. Though I screamed my loudest, the great height at which I was placed, and the humming din of the crowd, totally drowned my words. Again and again I tried it, but to no purpose. There she sat, slowly making the round of the circus, while the stranger walked at her side, to all seeming conversing as though no busy and prying multitude stood watching and observing them. Wearied with my failure to attract notice, I turned to address the jailer; but he had already gone, and I was alone. I next endeavored by a signal to call attention to me, and, at last, saw how two or three of the crowd had observed my waving a handkerchief, and were pointing it out to others. Doubtless they wondered how a poor captive could care for the pleasant follies of a life of whose commonest joys he was to be no sharer, and still greater was their astonishment as I flung forth a piece of money, — a gold Napoleon, it was, — which they speedily caught up and gave to Catinka. How

I watched her as she took it and showed it to the stranger! He, by his gesture, seemed angry, and made a motion as though asking her to throw it away; and then there seemed some discussion between them, and his petulance increased; and she, too, grew passionate, and, leaping from the horse, strode haughtily across the circus and disappeared. And then arose a tumult and confusion, the mob shouting madly for the Moorish girl to come back, and many much disposed to avenge her absence on the stranger. As for him, he pushed the mob haughtily aside and went his way; and though for a while the crowd continued to vent its expressions of displeasure and disappointment, the performance soon concluded, and all went their several roads homeward; and when I looked out upon the empty Platz, over which the dusky shadows of the old houses were now stealing to mingle together, and instead of the scene of bustle and excitement saw a few lingering townsfolk moody and purposeless, I asked myself if the whole incidents were not a vision mind-drawn and invented. There was not one single clew by which I could trace it to reality.

More than once in my life had my dreamy temperament played me such pranks; and, strangely too, even when I had assured myself of the deception, there would yet linger in my mind thoughts and impressions strong enough to influence my actions, just as we often see that our disbelief in a scandalous story is not sufficient to disabuse us of a certain power it wields over us.

Oh, what a long and dreary night was that, harassed with doubts, and worn out with speculations! My mind had been much weakened by my fever, and whenever I followed a train of thought too long, confusion was sure to ensue. The terror of this chaotic condition, where all people and lands and ideas and incidents jostle against each other in mad turmoil, can only be estimated by one who has felt it. Like the awful rush of sensations of him who is sliding down some steep descent to a tremendous precipice, one feels the gradual approach of that dreamy condition where reason is lost, and the mind a mere waif upon the waters.

"Here's your breakfast," said the jailer, as he stopped the course of my reverie. "And the Brigadier hopes you'll

be speedy with it, for you must reach Maltz by night-fall."

"Tell me," said I, eagerly, "was there a circus company here yesterday evening? Did they exhibit on the Platz there?"

"You are a deep one, you are!" muttered he, sulkily to himself, and left the cell.

CHAPTER XLIII.

I AM CONFINED IN THE AMBRAS SCHLOSS.

I BORE up admirably on my journey. I felt I was doing a very heroic thing. By my personation of Harpar, I was securing that poor fellow's escape, and giving him ample time to get over the Austrian frontier, and many a mile away from the beaks of the Double Eagle. I had read of such things in history, and I resolved I would not derogate from the proudest records of such self-devotion. Had I but remembered how long my illness had lasted, I might have easily seen that Harpar could by this time have arrived at Calcutta; but, unfortunately for me, I had no gauge of time whatever, and completely forgot the long interval of my fever.

On reaching Innspruck, I was sent on to an old château some ten miles away, called the Ambras Schloss, and being consigned to the charge of a retired artillery officer there, they seemed to have totally forgotten all about me. I lived with my old jailer just as if I were his friend: we worked together in the garden, pruned, and raked, and hoed, and weeded; we smoked and fished, and mended our nets on wet days, and read, living exactly as might any two people in a remote out-of-the-world spot.

There is a sort of armory at the Ambras, chiefly of old Tyrolese weapons of an early period, — maces and halberds, and double-handed swords, and such-like, — and one of our pastimes was arranging and settling and cataloguing them, for which, in the ancient records of the Schloss, there was ample material. This was an occupation that amused me vastly, and I took to it with great zeal, and with such success that old Hirsch, the jailer, at last consigned the whole to my charge, along with the task of exhibiting the

collection to strangers, — a source from which the honest veteran derived the better part of his means of life.

At first, I scarcely liked my function as showman, but, like all my other experiences in life, habit sufficed to reconcile me, and I took to the occupation as though I had been born to it. If now and then some rude or vulgar traveller would ruffle my temper by some illiterate remark or stupid question, I was well repaid by intercourse with a different stamp. They were to me such peeps at the world as a monk might have from the windows of his cloister, tempting, perhaps, but always blended with the sense of the security that encompassed him, and defended him from the cares of existence.

Perhaps the consciousness that I could assert my innocence and procure my freedom at any moment, for the first few months reconciled me to this strange life; but certainly, after a while, I ceased to care for any other existence, and never troubled my head either about past or future. I had, in fact, arrived at the great monastic elevation, in which a man, ceasing to be human, reaches the dignity of a vegetable.

I had begun, as I have said, by an act of heroism, in accepting all the penalties of another, and, long after I ceased to revert to this sacrifice, the impulse it had once given still continued to move me. If Hirsch never alluded to my imputed crime to me, I was equally reserved towards him.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A VISIT FROM THE HON. GREY BULLER.

FROM time to time, a couple of grave, judicial-looking men would arrive and pass the forenoon at the Ambras Schloss, in reading out certain documents to me. I never paid much attention to them, but my ear at moments would catch the strangest possible allegations as to my exalted political opinions, the dangerous associates I was bound up with, and the secret societies I belonged to. I heard once, too, and by mere accident, how at Steuben I had asked the jailer to procure me a horse, and thrown gold in handfuls from the windows of my prison, to bribe the townsfolk to my rescue, and I laughed to myself to think what a deal of pleading and proof it would take to rebut all these allegations, and how little likely it was I would ever engage in such a conflict.

By long dwelling on the thought of my noble devotion, and how it would read when I was dead and gone, I had extinguished within my heart all desire for other distinction, speculating only on what strange and ingenious theories men would spin for the secret clew to my motives. "True," they would say, "Potts never cared for Harpar. He was not a man to whom Potts would have attached himself under any circumstances; they were, as individuals, totally unlike and unsympathetic. How, then, explain this extraordinary act of self-sacrifice? Was he prompted by the hope that the iniquities of the Austrian police system would receive their death-blow from his story, and that the mound that covered him in the churchyard would be the altar of Liberty to thousands? Or was Potts one of those enthusiastic creatures only too eager to carry the load of some other pilgrim in life?"

While I used thus to reason and speculate, I little knew that I had become a sort of European notoriety. Some Englishwoman, however, some vagrant tourist, had put me in her book as the half-witted creature who showed the coins and curiosities at Ambras, and mentioned how, for I know not how many years, I was never heard to utter a syllable except on questions of old armor and antiquities. In consequence I was always asked for by my travelling countrymen, and my peculiarities treated with all that playful good taste for which tourists are famous. I remember one day having refused to perform the showman to a British family. I had a headache, or was sulky, or a fit of rebellion had got hold of me, but I sauntered out into the grounds and would not see them. In my walk through a close alley of laurels, I chanced to overhear the stranger conversing with Hirsch, and making myself the subject of his inquiries; and, as I listened, I heard Hirsch say that one entire room of the château was devoted to the papers and documents in my case, and that probably it would occupy a quick reader about twelve months to peruse them. He added, that as I made no application for a trial myself, nor any of my friends showed an inclination to bestir themselves about me, the Government would very probably leave me to live and die where I was. Thereupon the Briton broke out into a worthy fit of indignant eloquence. He denounced the Hapsburgs and praised the Habeas Corpus; he raved of the power of England, our press, our public opinion, our new frigates. He said he would make Europe ring with the case. It was as bad, it was worse than Caspar Hauser's, for he was an idiot outright, and *I* appeared to have the enjoyment of certain faculties. He said it should appear in the "Times," and be mentioned in the House; and as I listened, the strangest glow ran through me, a mild and pleasurable enthusiasm, to think that all the might, majesty, and power of Great Britain was about to interest itself in behalf of Potts!

The Briton kept his word; the time, too, favored him. It was a moment when wandering Englishmen were exhuming grievances throughout every land of Europe; and while one had discovered some case of religious intolerance in

Norway, another beat him out of the field with the cold-blooded atrocities of Naples. My Englishman chanced to be an M.P., and therefore he asked, "in his place," if the Foreign Secretary had any information to afford the House with respect to the case of the man called Harper, or Harpar, he was not certain which, and who had been confined for upwards of ten months in a dungeon in Austria, on allegations of which the accused knew nothing whatever, and attested by witnesses with whom he had never been confronted.

In the absence of his chief, the Under-Secretary rose to assure the right honorable gentleman that the case was one which had for a considerable time engaged the attention of the department he belonged to, and that the most unremitting exertions of her Majesty's envoy at Vienna were now being devoted to obtain the fullest information as to the charges imputed to Harpar, and he hoped in a few days to be able to lay the result of his inquiry on the table of the House.

It was in about a week after this that Hirsch came to tell me that a member of her Majesty's legation at Vienna had arrived to investigate my case, and interrogate me in person. I am half ashamed to say how vaingloriously I thought of the importance thus lent me. I felt, somehow, as though the nation missed me. Waiting patiently, as it might be, for my return, and yet no tidings coming, they said, "What has become of Potts?" It was clearly a case upon which they would not admit of any mystification or deceit. "No secret tribunals, no hole-and-corner commitments with us! Where is he? Produce him. Say, with what is he charged?" I was going to be the man of the day. I knew it, I felt it; I saw a great tableau of my life unrolling itself before me. Potts, the young enthusiast after virtue, — hopeful, affectionate, confiding, giving his young heart to that fair-haired girl as freely as he would have bestowed a moss-rose; and she, making light of the gift, and with a woman's coquetry, torturing him by a jealous levity till he resented the wrong, and tore himself away. And then, Catinka, — how I tried the gold of my nature in that crucible, and would not fall in love with her before I

had made her worthy of my love; and when I had failed in that, how I had turned from love to friendship, and offered myself the victim for a man I never cared about. No matter; the world will know me at last. Men will recognize the grand stuff that I am made of. If commentators spend years in exploring the recondite passages of great writers, and making out beauties where there were only obscurities, why should not all the dark parts of my nature come out as favorably, and some flattering interpreter say, "Potts was for a long time misconceived; few men were more wrongfully judged by their contemporaries. It was to a mere accident, after all, we owe it that we are now enabled to render him the justice so long denied him. His was one of those remarkable natures in which it is difficult to say whether humility or self-confidence predominated"?

Then I thought of the national excitement to discover the missing Potts; just as if I had been a lost Arctic voyager. Expeditions sent out to track me; all the thousand speculations as to whether I had gone this way or that; where and from whom the latest tidings of me could be traced; the heroic offers of new discoverers to seek me living, or, sad alternative, restore to the country that mourned me the *reliquiæ Pottsi*. I always grew tender in my moods of self-compassion, and I felt my eyes swimming now in pity for my fate; and let me add in this place my protest against the vulgar error which stigmatizes as selfishness the mere fact of a man's susceptibility. How, I would simply ask, can he feel for others who has no sense of sympathy with his own suffering nature? If the well of human kindness be dried up within him, how can he give to the parched throats the refreshing waters of compassion?

Deal with the fact how you may, I was very sorry for myself, and seriously doubted if as sincere a mourner would bewail me when I was gone.

If a little time had been given me, I would have endeavored to get up my snug little chamber somewhat more like a prison cell; I would have substituted some straw for my comfortable bed, and gracefully draped a few chains upon the walls and some stray torture implements out of the Armory; but the envoy came like a "thief in the night," and was already on the stairs when he was announced.

"Oh! this is his den, is it?" cried he from without, as he slowly ascended the stairs. "Egad! he has n't much to complain of in the matter of a lodging. I only wish our fellows were as well off at Vienna." And with these words there entered into my room a tall young fellow, with a light brown moustache, dressed in a loose travelling suit, and with the lounging air of a man sauntering into a *café*. He did not remove his hat as he came in, or take the cigar from his mouth; the latter circumstance imparting a certain confusion to his speech that made him occasionally scarce intelligible. Only deigning to bestow a passing look on me, he moved towards the window, and looked out on the grand panorama of the Tyrol Alps, as they enclose the valley of Innsbruck.

"Well," said he to himself, "all this ain't so bad for a dungeon."

The tone startled me. I looked again at him, I rallied myself to an effort of memory, and at once recalled the young fellow I had met on the South-Western line and from whom I had accidentally carried away the despatch-bag. To my beard, and my long imprisonment, I trusted for not being recognized, and I sat patiently awaiting my examination.

"An Englishman, I suppose?" asked he, turning hastily round. "And of English parents?"

"Yes," was my reply, for I determined on brevity wherever possible.

"What brought you into this scrape? — I mean, why did you come here at all?"

"I was travelling."

"Travelling? Stuff and nonsense! Why should fellows like you travel? What's your rank in life?"

"A gentleman."

"Ah! but whose gentleman, my worthy friend? Ain't you a flunkey? There, it's out! I say, have you got a match to light my cigar? Thanks, — all right. Look here, now, — don't let us be beating about the bush all the day, — I believe this government is just as sick of you as you are of them. You've been here two months, ain't it so?"

"Ten months and upwards."

"Well, ten months. And you want to get away?"

I made no answer; indeed, his free-and-easy manner so disconcerted me that I could not speak, and he went on, —

"I suspect they have n't got much against you, or that they don't care about it; and, besides, they are civil to us just now. At all events, it can be done, — you understand? — it can be done."

"Indeed," said I, half superciliously.

"Yes," resumed he, "I think so; not but you'd have managed better in leaving the thing to *us*. That stupid notion you all have of writing letters to newspapers and getting some troublesome fellow to ask questions in the House, that's what spoils everything! How can *we* negotiate when the whole story is in the 'Times' or the 'Daily News'?"

"I opine, sir, that you are ascribing to me an activity and energy I have no claim to."

"Well, if you did n't write those letters, somebody else did. I don't care a rush for the difference. You see, here's how the matter stands. This Mr. Brigges, or Rigges, has gone off, and does n't care to prosecute, and all his allegations against you fall to the ground. Well, these people fancy they could carry on the thing themselves, you understand; we think not. They say they have got a strong case; perhaps they have; but we ask, 'What's the use of it? Sending the poor beggar to Spielberg won't save you, will it?' And so we put it to them this way: 'Draw stakes, let him off, and both can cry quits.' There, give me another light. Is n't that the common-sense view of it?"

"I scarcely dare to say that I understand you aright."

"Oh, I can guess why. I have had dealings with fellows of your sort before. You don't fancy my not alluding to compensation, eh? You want to hear about the money part of the matter?"

And he laughed aloud; but whether at *my* mercenary spirit or *his own* shrewdness in detecting it, I do not really know.

"Well, I'm afraid," continued he, "you'll be disappointed there. These Austrians are hard up; besides, they

never do pay. It's against their system, and so we never ask them."

"Would it be too much, sir, to ask why I have been imprisoned?"

"Perhaps not; but a great deal too much for me to tell you. The confounded papers would fill a cart, and that's the reason I say, cut your stick, my man, and get away." Again he turned to the window, and, looking out, asked, "Any shooting about here? There ought to be cocks in that wood yonder?" and without caring for reply, went on, "After all, you know what bosh it is to talk about chains and dungeons, and bread-and-water, and the rest of it. You've been living in clover here. That old fellow below tells me that you dine with him every day; that you might have gone into Innspruck, to the theatre if you liked it. — I'll swear there are snipes in that low land next the river. — Think it over, Rigges, think it over."

"I am not Rigges."

"Oh, I forgot! you're the other fellow. Well, think it over, Harpar."

"My name is not Harpar, sir."

"What do I care for a stray vowel or two? Maybe you call yourself Harpar, or Harpér? It's all the same to us."

"It is not the question of a vowel or two, sir; and I desire you to remark it is the graver one of a mistaken identity!" I said this with a high-sounding importance that I thought must astound him; but his light and frivolous nature was impervious to rebuke.

"We have nothing to say to that," replied he, carelessly. "You may be Noakes or Styles. I believe they are the names of any fellows who are supposed by courtesy to have no name at all, and it's all alike to us. What I have to observe to you is this: nobody cares very much whether you are detained here or not; nobody wants to detain you. Just reflect, therefore, if it's not the best thing you can do to slope off, and make no more fuss about it?"

"Once for all, sir," said I, still more impressively, "I am not the person against whom this charge is made. The authorities have all along mistaken me for another."

"Well, what if they have? Does it signify one kreutzer?

We have had trouble enough about the matter already, and do not embroil us any further."

"May I ask, sir, just for information, who are the 'we' you have so frequently alluded to?"

Had I asked him in what division of the globe he understood us then to be conversing, he would not have regarded me with a look of more blank astonishment.

"Who are we?" repeated he. "Did you ask who are we?"

"Yes, sir, that was what I made bold to ask."

"Cool, certainly; what might be called uncommon cool. To what line of life were you brought up to, my worthy gent? I have rather a curiosity about your antecedents."

"That same curiosity cost you a trifle once before," said I, no longer able to control myself, and dying to repay his impertinence. "I remember, once upon a time, meeting you on a railroad, and you were so eager to exhibit the skill with which you could read a man's calling, that you bet me a sovereign you would guess mine. You did so, and lost."

"You can't be—no, it's impossible. Are you really the goggle-eyed fellow that walked off with the bag for Kalbbratonstadt?"

"I did, by mistake, carry away a bag on that occasion, and so punctiliously did I repay my error that I travelled the whole journey to convey those despatches to their destination."

"I know all about it," said he, in a frank, gay manner. "Doubleton told me the whole story. You dined with him and pretended you were I don't remember whom, and then you took old Mamma Keats off to Como and made her believe you were Louis Philippe, and you made fierce love to your pretty companion, who was fool enough to like you. By Jove! what a rig you must have run! We have all laughed over it a score of times."

"If I knew who 'we' were, I am certain I should feel flattered by any amusement I afforded them, notwithstanding how much more they are indebted to fiction than fact regarding me. I never assumed to be Louis Philippe, nor affected to be any person of distinction. A flighty old lady

was foolish enough to imagine me a prince of the Orleans family —”

“You, — a prince! Oh, this is too absurd!”

“I confess, sir, I cannot see the matter in this light. I presume the mistake to be one by no means difficult to have occurred. Mrs. Keats has seen a deal of life and the world —”

“Not so much as you fancy,” broke he in. “She was a long time in that private asylum up at Brompton, and then down in Staffordshire; altogether, she must have passed five-and-twenty or thirty years in a rather restricted circle.”

“Mad! Was she mad?”

“Not what one would call mad, but queer. They were all queer. Hargrave, the second brother, was the fellow that made that shindy in the Mauritius, and our friend Shalley is n’t a conjuror. And *we* thought you were larking the old lady, I assure you we did.”

“‘We’ were once more mistaken, then,” said I, sneeringly.

“We all said, too, at the time, that Doubleton had been ‘let in.’ He gave you a good round sum for expenses on the road, did n’t he, and you sent it all back to him.”

“Every shilling of it.”

“So he told us, and that was what puzzled us more than all the rest. Why did you give up the money?”

“Simply, sir, because it was not mine.”

“Yes, yes, to be sure, I know that; but I mean, what suggested the restitution?”

“Really, sir, your question leads me to suppose that the ‘we’ so often referred to are not eminently remarkable for integrity.”

“Like their neighbors, I take it, — neither better nor worse. But won’t you tell why you gave up the tin?”

“I should be hopeless of any attempt to explain my motives, sir; so pray excuse me.”

“You were right, at all events,” said he, not heeding the sarcasm of my manner. “There’s no chance for the knaves, now, with the telegraph system. As it was, there were orders flying through Europe to arrest Pottinger, — I

can't forget the name. We used to have it every day in the Chancellerie: Pottinger, five feet nine, weak-looking and vulgar, low forehead, light hair and eyes, slight lisp, talks German fluently, but ill. I have copied that portrait of you twenty, ay, thirty times."

"And yet, sir, neither the name nor the description apply. I am no more Pottinger than I am ignoble-looking and vulgar."

• "What's the name, then? — not Harpar, nor Pottinger? But who cares a rush for the name of fellows like you? You change them just as you do the color of your coat."

"May I take the liberty of asking, sir, just for information, as you said awhile ago, how you would take it were I to make as free with you as you have been pleased to do with *me*? To give a mock inventory of your external characteristics, and a false name to yourself?"

• "Laugh, probably, if I were amused; throw you out of the window if you offended me."

"The very thing I'd do with you this moment, if I was strong enough," said I, resolutely. And he flung himself into a chair, and laughed as I did not believe he could laugh.

"Well," cried he, at last, "as this room is about fifty feet or so from the ground, it's as well as it is. But now let us wind up this affair. You want to get away from this, I suppose; and as nobody wants to detain you, the thing is easy enough. You need n't make a fuss about compensation, for they'll not give a kreutzer, and you'd better not write a book about it, because 'we' don't stand fellows who write books; so just take a friend's advice, and go off without military honors of any kind."

"I neither acknowledge the friendship nor accept the advice, sir. The motives which induced me to suffer imprisonment for another are quite sufficient to raise me above any desire to make a profit of it."

"I think I understand *you*," said he, with a cunning expression in his half-closed eyes. "You go in for being a 'character.' Haven't I hit it? You want to be thought a strange, eccentric sort of fellow. Now there was a time the world had a taste for that kind of thing. Romeo

Coates, and Brummel, and that Irish fellow that walked to Jerusalem, and half-a-dozen others, used to amuse the town in those days, but it's all as much bygone now as starched neckcloths and Hessian boots. Ours is an age of paletots and easy manners, and you are trying to revive what our grandfathers discarded and got rid of. It won't do, Pottinger; it will not."

"I am not Pottinger; my name is Algernon Sydney Potts."

"Ah! there's the mischief all out at last. What could come of such a collocation of names but a life of incongruity and absurdity! You owe all your griefs to your godfathers, Potts. If they'd have called you Peter, you'd have been a well-conducted poor creature. Well, I'm to give you a passport. Where do you wish to go?"

"I wish, first of all, to go to Como."

"I think I know why. But you're on a wrong cast there. They have left that long since."

"Indeed, and for what place?"

"They've gone to pass the winter at Malta. Mamma Keats required a dry, warm climate, and you'll find them at a little country-house about a mile from Valetta; the Jasmynes, I think it's called. I have a brother quartered in the island, and he tells me he has seen them, but they won't receive visits, nor go out anywhere. But, of course, a Royal Highness is always sure of a welcome. Prince Potts is an 'Open, sesame!' wherever he goes."

"What atrocious tobacco this is of yours, Buller!" said I, taking a cigar from his case as it lay on the table. "I suppose that you small fry of diplomacy cannot get things in duty free, eh?"

"Try this cheroot; you'll find it better," said he, opening a secret pocket in the case.

"Nothing to boast of," said I, puffing away, while he continued to fill up the blanks in my passport.

"Would you like an introduction to my brother? He's on the Government staff there, and knows every one. He's a jolly sort of fellow, besides, and you'll get on well together."

"I don't care if I do," said I, carelessly; "though, as a

rule, your red-coat is very bad style, — flippancy without smartness, and familiar without ease."

"Severe, Potts, but not altogether unjust; but you'll find George above the average of his class, and I think you'll like him."

"Don't let him ask me to his mess," said I, with an insolent drawl. "That's an amount of boredom I could not submit to. Caution him to make no blunder of that kind."

He looked up at me with a strange twinkle in his eyes, which I could not interpret. He was either in intense enjoyment of my smartness, or Heaven knows what other sentiment then moved him. At all events, I was in ecstasy at the success of my newly discovered vein, and walked the room, humming a tune, as he wrote the letter that was to present me to his brother.

"Why had I never hit upon this plan before?" thought I. "How was it that it had not occurred that the maxim of homœopathy is equally true in morals as in medicine, and that *similia similibus curantur*! So long as I was meek, humble, and submissive, Buller's impertinent presumption only increased at every moment. With every fresh concession of mine he continued to encroach, and now that I had adopted his own strategy, and attacked, he fell back at once." I was proud, very proud of my discovery. It is a new contribution to that knowledge of life which, notwithstanding all my disasters, I believed to be essentially my gift.

At last he finished his note, folded, sealed, and directed it, — "The Hon. George Buller, A.D.C., Government House, Malta, favored by Algernon Sydney Potts, Esq."

"Isn't that all right?" asked he, pointing to my name. "I was within an ace of writing Hampden-Russell too." And he laughed at his own very meagre jest.

"I hope you have merely made this an introduction?" said I.

"Nothing more; but why so?"

"Because it's just as likely that I never present it! I am the slave of the humor I find myself in, and I rarely do anything that costs me the slightest effort." I said this with a close and, indeed, a servile imitation of Charles

Matthews in "Used Up;" but it was a grand success, and Buller was palpably vanquished.

"Well, for George's sake, I hope your mood may be the favorable one. Is there anything more I can do for you? Can you think of nothing wherein I may be serviceable?"

"Nothing. Stay, I rather think our people at home might with propriety show my old friend Hirsch here some mark of attention for his conduct towards me. I don't know whether they give a C.B. for that sort of thing, but a sum, — a handsome sum, — something to mark the service, and the man to whom it was rendered. Don't you think 'we' could manage that?"

"I'll see what can be done. I don't despair of success."

"As for your share in the affair, Buller, I'll take care that it shall be mentioned in the proper quarter. If I *have* a characteristic, — my friends say I have many, — but if I have one, it is that I never forget the most trifling service of the humblest of those who have aided me. You are young, and have your way to make in life. Go back, therefore, and carry with you the reflection that Potts is your friend."

I saw he was affected at this, for he covered his face with his handkerchief and turned away, and for some seconds his shoulders moved convulsively.

"Yes," said I, with a struggle to become humble, "there are richer men, there are men more influential by family ties and connections, there are men who occupy a more conspicuous position before the public eye, there are men who exercise a wider sway in the world of politics and party; but this I will say, that there is not one — no, not one — individual in the British dominions who, when you come to consider either the difficulties he has overcome, the strength of the prejudices he has conquered, the totally unassisted and unaided struggle he has had to maintain against not alone the errors, for errors are human, but still worse, the ungenerous misconceptions, the — I will go further, and call them the wilful misrepresentations of those who, from education and rank and condition, might be naturally supposed — indeed, confidently affirmed to be — to be —"

"I am certain of it!" cried he, grasping my hand, and

rescuing me from a situation very like smothering, — "I am certain of it!" And with a hurried salutation, for his feelings were evidently overcoming him, he burst away, and descended the stairs five steps at a time; and although I was sorry he had not waited till I finished my peroration, I was really glad that the act had ended and the curtain fallen.

"What a deal of bad money passes current in this world," said I, as I was alone; "and what a damper it is upon honest industry to think how easy it is to eke out life with a forgery!"

"What do you say to a dinner with me at the 'Swan' in Innspruck, Potts?" cried out Buller, from the courtyard.

"Excuse me, I mean to eat my last cutlet here, with my old jailer. It will be an event for the poor fellow as long as he lives. Good-bye, and a safe journey to you."

CHAPTER XLV.

MY CANDID AVOWAL TO KATE HERBERT.

I WAS now bound for the first port in the Mediterranean from which I could take ship for Malta; and the better to carry out my purpose, I resolved never to make acquaintance with any one, or be seduced by any companionship, till I had seen Miss Herbert, and given her the message I was charged with. This time, at least, I would be a faithful envoy; at least, as faithful as a man might be who had gone to sleep over his credentials for a twelvemonth. And so I reached Maltz, and took my place by diligence over the Stelvio down to Lecco, never trusting myself with even the very briefest intercourse with my fellow-travellers, and suffering them to indulge in the humblest estimate of me, morally and intellectually, — all that I might be true to my object and firm to my fixed purpose. For the first time in my life I tried to present myself in an unfavorable aspect, and I was astonished to find the experiment by no means unpleasing, the reason being, probably, that it was an eminent success. I began to see how the surly people are such acute philosophers in life, and what a deal of selfish gratification they must derive from their uncurbed ill-humor. I reached Genoa in time to catch a steamer for Malta. It was crowded, and with what, in another mood, I might have called pleasant people; but I held myself estranged and aloof from all. I could mark many an impertinent allusion to my cold and distant manner, and could see that a young sub on his way to join was even witty at the expense of my retiring disposition. The creature, Groves he was called, used to try to "trot me out," as he phrased it; but I maintained both my resolve and my temper, and gave him no triumph.

I was almost sorry on the morning we dropped anchor in the harbor. The sense of doing something, anything, with a firm persistence, had given me cheerfulness and courage. However, I had now a task of some nicety before me, and addressed myself at once to its discharge. At the hotel I learned that the cottage inhabited by Mrs. Keats was in a small nook of one of the bays, and only an easy walk from the town; and so I despatched a messenger at once with Miss Crofton's note to Miss Herbert, enclosed in a short one from myself, to know if she would permit me to wait upon her, with reference to the matter in the letter. I spoke of myself in the third person and as the bearer of the letter.

While I was turning over the letters and papers in my writing-desk, awaiting her reply, I came upon Buller's note to his brother, and, without any precise idea why, I sent it by a servant to the Government House, with my card. It was completely without a purpose that I did so, and if my reader has not experienced moments of the like "inconsequence," I should totally break down in attempting to account for their meaning.

Miss Herbert's reply came back promptly. She requested that the writer of the note she had just read would favor her with a visit at his earliest convenience.

I set forth immediately. What a strange and thrilling sensation it is when we take up some long-dropped link in life, go back to some broken thread of our existence, and try to attach it to the present! We feel young again in the bygone, and yet far older even than our real age in the thought of the changes time has wrought upon us in the meanwhile. A week or so before I had looked with impatience for this meeting, and now I grew very faint-hearted as the moment drew nigh. The only way I could summon courage for the occasion was by thinking that in the mission intrusted to me *I* was actually nothing. There were incidents and events not one of which touched me, and I should pass away off the scene when our interview was over, and be no more remembered by her.

It was evident that the communication had engaged her attention to some extent by the promptitude of her mes-

sage to me; and with this thought I crossed the little lawn, and rang the bell at the door.

"The gentleman expected by Miss Herbert, sir?" asked a smart English maid. "Come this way, sir. She will see you in a few minutes."

I had fully ten minutes to inspect the details of a pretty little drawing-room, one of those little female temples where scattered drawings and books and music, and, above all, the delicious odor of fresh flowers, all harmonize together, and set you a-thinking how easily life could glide by with such appliances were they only set in motion by the touch of the enchantress herself. The door opened at last, but it was the maid; she came to say that Mrs. Keats was very poorly that day, and Miss Herbert could not leave her at that moment; and if it were not perfectly convenient to the gentleman to wait, she begged to know when it would suit him to call again?

"As for me," said I, "I have come to Malta solely on this matter; pray say that I will wait as long as she wishes. I am completely at her orders."

I strolled out after this through one of the windows that opened on the lawn, and, gaining the seaside, I sat down upon a rock to bide her coming. I might have sat about half an hour thus, when I heard a rapid step approaching, and I had just time to arise when Miss Herbert stood before me. She started back, and grew pale, very pale, as she recognized me, and for fully a minute there we both stood, unable to speak a word.

"Am I to understand, sir," said she, at last, "that you are the bearer of this letter?" And she held it open towards me.

"Yes," said I, with a great effort at collectedness. "I have much to ask your forgiveness for. It is fully a year since I was charged to place that in your hands, but one mischance after another has befallen me; not to own that in my own purposeless mode of life I have had no enemy worse than my fate."

"I have heard something of your fondness for adventure," said she, with a strange smile that blended a sort of pity with a gentle irony. "After we parted company at Schaff-

hausen, I believe you travelled for some time on foot? We heard, at least, that you took a fancy to explore a mode of life few persons have penetrated, or, at least, few of your rank and condition."

"May I ask, what do you believe that rank and condition to be, Miss Herbert?" asked I, firmly.

She blushed deeply at this; perhaps I was too abrupt in the way I spoke, and I hastened to add, —

"When I offered to be the bearer of the letter you have just read, I was moved by another wish than merely to render you some service. I wanted to tell you, once for all, that if I lived for a while in a fiction land of my own invention, with day-dreams and fancies, and hopes and ambitions all unreal, I have come to pay the due penalty of my deceit, and confess that nothing can be more humble than I am in birth, station, or fortune, — my father an apothecary, my name Potts, my means a very few pounds in the world; and yet, with all that avowal, I feel prouder now that I have made it, than ever I did in the false assumption of some condition I had no claim to."

She held out her hand to me with such a significant air of approval, and smiled so good-naturedly, that I could not help pressing it to my lips, and kissing it rapturously.

Taking a seat at my side, and with a voice meant to recall me to a quiet and business-like demeanor, she asked me to read over Miss Crofton's letter. I told her that I knew every line of it by heart, and, more still, I knew the whole story to which it related. It was a topic that required the nicest delicacy to touch on, but with a frankness that charmed me, she said, —

"You have had the candor to tell me freely your story; let me imitate you, and reveal mine.

"You know who we are, and whence we have sprung; that my father was a simple laborer on a line of railroad, and by dint of zeal and intelligence, and an energy that would not be balked or impeded, that he raised himself to station and affluence. You have heard of his connection with Sir Elkanah Crofton, and how unfortunately it was broken off; but you cannot know the rest, — that is, you cannot know what we alone know, and what is not so much

as suspected by others; and of this I can scarcely dare to speak, since it is essentially the secret of my family."

I guessed at once to what she alluded; her troubled manner, her swimming eyes, and her quivering voice, all betraying that she referred to the mystery of her father's fate; while I doubted within myself whether it were right and fitting for me to acknowledge that I knew the secret source of her anxiety, she relieved me from my embarrassment by continuing thus, —

"Your kind and generous friends have not suffered themselves to be discouraged by defeat. They have again and again renewed their proposals to my mother, only varying the mode, in the hope that by some stratagem they might overcome her reasons for refusal. Now, though this rejection, so persistent as it is, may seem ungracious, it is not without a fitting and substantial cause."

Again she faltered, and grew confused, and now I saw how she struggled between a natural reserve and an impulse to confide the sorrow that oppressed her to one who might befriend her.

"You may speak freely to me," said I, at last. "I am not ignorant of the mystery you hint at. Crofton has told me what many surmise and some freely believe in."

"But we know it, — know it for a certainty," cried she, clasping my hand in her eagerness. "It is no longer a surmise or a suspicion. It is a certainty, — a fact! Two letters in his handwriting have reached my mother, — one from St. Louis, in America, where he had gone first; the second from an Alpine village, where he was laid up in sickness. He had had a terrible encounter with a man who had done him some gross wrong, and he was wounded in the shoulder; after which he had to cross the Rhine, wading or swimming, and travel many miles ere he could find shelter. When he wrote, however, he was rapidly recovering, and as quickly regaining all his old courage and daring."

"And from that time forward have you had no tidings of him?"

"Nothing but a check on a Russian banker in London to pay to my mother's order a sum of money, — a considerable one, too; and although she hoped to gain some clew to him

through this, she could not succeed, nor have we now any trace of him whatever. I ought to mention," said she, as if catching up a forgotten thread in her narrative, "that in his last letter he enjoined my mother not to receive any payment from the assurance company, nor enter into any compromise with them; and, above all, to live in the hope that we should meet again and be happy."

"And are you still ignorant of where he now is?"

"We only know that a cousin of mine, an officer of engineers at Aden, heard of an Englishman being engaged by the Shah of Persia to report on certain silver mines at Kashan, and from all he could learn, the description would apply to him. My cousin had obtained leave of absence expressly to trace him, and promised in his last letter to bring me himself any tidings he might procure here to Malta. Indeed, when I learned that a stranger had asked to see me, I was full sure it was my cousin Harry."

Was it that her eyes grew darker in color as this name escaped, her was it that a certain tremor shook her voice, or was it the anxiety of my own jealous humor that made me wretched as I heard of that cousin Harry, now mentioned for the first time?

"What reparation can I make you for so blank a disappointment?" said I, with a sad, half-bitter tone.

"Be the same kind friend that he would have proved himself if it had been his fortune to have come first," said she; and though she spoke calmly, she blushed deeply! "Here," said she, hurriedly, taking a small printed paragraph from a letter, and eagerly, as it seemed, trying to recover her former manner, — "here is a slip I have cut out of the 'Levant Herald.' I found it about two months since. It ran thus: 'The person who had contracted for the works at Pera, and who now turns out to be an Englishman, is reported to have had a violent altercation yesterday with Musted Pasha, in consequence of which he has thrown up his contract, and demanded his passport for Russia. It is rumored here that the Russian ambassador is no stranger to this rupture.' Vague as this is, I feel persuaded that he is the person alluded to, and that it is from Constantinople we must trace him."

"Well," cried I, "I am ready. I will set out at once."

"Oh! can I believe you will do us this great service?" cried she, with swimming eyes and clasped hands.

"This time you will find me faithful," said I, gravely. "He who has said and done so many foolish things as I have, must, by one good action, give bail for his future character."

"You are a true friend, and you have all my confidence."

"Mrs. Keats's compliments, miss," said the maid at this moment, "and hopes the gentleman will stay to dinner with you, though she cannot come down herself."

"She imagines you are my cousin, whom she is aware I have been expecting," said Miss Herbert, in a whisper, and evidently appearing uncertain how to act.

"Oh!" said I, with an anguish I could not repress, "would that I could change my lot with his!"

"Very well, Mary," said Miss Herbert; "thank your mistress from me, and say the gentleman accepts her invitation with pleasure. Is it too much presumption on my part, sir, to say so?" said she, with a low whisper, while a half-malicious twinkle lit up her eyes, and I could not speak with happiness.

Determined, however, to give an earnest of my zeal in her cause, I declared I would at once return to the town, and learn when the first packet sailed for Constantinople. The dinner hour was seven, so that I had fully five hours yet to make my inquiries ere we met at table. I wondered at myself how business-like and practical I had become; but a strong impulse now impelled me, and seemed to add a sort of strength to my whole nature.

"As Cousin Harry is the mirror of punctuality, and you now represent him, Mr. Potts," said she, shaking my hand, "pray remember not to be later than seven."

CHAPTER XLVI.

CAPTAIN ROGERS STANDS MY FRIEND.

"CONSTANTINOPLE, ODESSA, and the LEVANT.—The 'Cyclops,' five hundred horse-power, to sail on Wednesday morning, at eight o'clock. For freight or passage apply to Captain Robert B. Rogers."

This announcement, which I found amidst a great many others in a frame over the fireplace in the coffee-room, struck me forcibly, first of all, because, not belonging to the regular mail-packets, it suggested a cheap passage; and, secondly, it promised an early departure, and the vessel was to sail on the very next morning, an amount of promptitude that I felt would gratify Miss Herbert.

Now, although I had been living for a considerable time back at the cost of the Imperial House of Hapsburg, my resources for such an expedition as was opening before me were of the most slender kind. I made a careful examination of all my worldly wealth, and it amounted to the sum of forty-three pounds some odd shillings. On *terra firma* I could, of course, economize to any extent. With self-denial and resolution I could live on very little. Life in the East, I had often heard, was singularly cheap and inexpensive. All I had read of Oriental habits in the "Arabian Nights" and "Tales of the Genii," assured me that with a few dates and a watermelon a man dined fully as well as need be; and the delicious warmth of the climate rendered shelter a complete superfluity. Before forming anything like a correct budget, I must ascertain what would be the cost of my passage to Constantinople, and so I rang for the waiter to direct me to the address of the advertiser.

"That's the captain yonder, sir," whispered the waiter; and he pointed to a stout, weather-beaten man, who, with his

hands in the pockets of his pilot-coat, was standing in front of the fire, smoking a cigar.

Although I had never seen him before, the features reminded me of some one I had met with, and suddenly I bethought me of the skipper with whom I had sailed from Ireland for Milford, and who had given me a letter for his brother "Bob," — the very Robert Rogers now before me.

"Do you know this handwriting, Captain?" said I, drawing the letter from my pocket-book.

"That's my brother Joe's," said he, not offering to take the letter from my hand, or removing the cigar from his mouth, but talking with all the unconcern in life. "That's Joe's own scrawl, and there ain't a worse from this to himself."

"The letter is for you," said I, rather offended at his coolness.

"So I see. Stick it up there, over the chimney; Joe has never anything to say that won't keep."

"It is a letter of introduction, sir," said I, still more haughtily.

"And what if it be? Won't that keep? Who is it to introduce?"

"The humble individual before you, Captain Rogers."

"So, that's it!" said he, slowly. "Well, read it out for me; for, to tell you the truth, there's no harder navigation to me than one of Joe's scrawls."

"I believe I can master it," said I, opening and reading what originally had been composed and drawn up by myself. When I came to "Algernon Sydney Potts, a man so completely after your own heart," he drew his cigar from his mouth, and, laying his hand on my shoulder, turned me slowly around till the light fell full upon me.

"No, Joseph," said he, deliberately, "not a bit of it, my boy. This ain't my sort of chap at all!"

I almost choked with anger, but somehow there was such an apparent earnestness in the man, and such a total absence of all wish to offend, that I read on to the end.

"Well," said he, as I concluded, "he used n't to be so wordy as that. I wonder what came over him. Mayhap he was n't well."

What a comment on a style that might have adorned the Correct Letter Writer!

"He was, on the contrary, in the enjoyment of perfect health, sir," said I, tartly.

"All I can pick out of it is, I ain't to offer you any money; and as there is n't any direction easier to follow, nor pleasanter to obey, here's my hand!" And he wrung mine with a grip that would have flattened a chain cable.

"What's your line, here? You ain't sodgering, are you?"

"No; I'm travelling, for pleasure, for information, for pastime, as one might say."

"In the general do-nothing and careless line of business? That ain't mine. No, by jingo! I don't eat my fish without catching, ay, and salting them too, I ain't ashamed to say. I'm captain, supercargo, and pilot of my own craft; take every lunar that is taken aboard. I've writ every line that ever is writ in the log-book, and I vaccinated every man and boy aboard for the natural small-pox with these fingers and this tool that you see here!" And he produced an old and very rusty instrument of veterinary surgery from his vest-pocket, where it lay with copper money, tobacco quids, and lucifer matches.

I quickly remembered the character for inordinate boastfulness his brother had given me, and of which he thus, without any provocation on my part, afforded me a slight specimen. Now, perhaps, at this stage of my narrative, I might never have alluded to him at all, if it were not for the opportunity it gives me of recording how nobly and how resolutely I resisted what may be called the most trying temptation of human nature. An inveterate dram-drinker has been known to turn away from the proffered glass; an incurable gambler has been seen to decline the invitation to "cut in;" dignitaries of the church have begged off being made bishops; but is there any mention in history of an anecdote-monger suffering himself to be patiently vanquished, and retiring from the field without firing off at least an "incident that occurred to himself"? If ever a man was sorely tried, *I* was. Here was this coarsely minded vulgar dog, with nothing pictorial or imaginative in his nature,

heaping story upon story of his own feats and achievements, in which not one solitary situation ever suggested an interest or awakened an anxiety; and I, who could have shot my tigers, crippled my leopards, hamstrung my lionesses, rescued men from drowning, and women from fire, — with little life touches to thrill the heart and force tears from the eyes of a stock-broker, — I, I say, had to stand there and listen in silence! Watching a creature banging away at a target that he never hit, with an old flint musket, while you held in your hand a short Enfield that would have driven the ball through the bull's eye, is nothing to this; and to tell the truth, it nearly choked me. Twice I had to cough down the words, "Now let me mention a personal fact." But I did succeed, and I am proud to say I only grew very red in the face, and felt that singing noise in the ears and general state of muddle that forebodes a fit. But I rallied, and said in a voice, slow from the dignity of a self-conquest, —

"Can you take me as a passenger to Constantinople?"

"To Constantinople? Ay, to the Persian Gulf, to Point de Galle, to Cochin China, to Ross River; don't think to puzzle me with navigation, my lad."

"Are there many other passengers?"

"I could have five hundred, if I'd take 'em! Put Bob Rogers on a placard, and see what'll happen. If I said, 'I'm a-going to sea on a plank to-morrow,' there's men would rather come along with me than go in the 'Queen' or the 'Hannibal.' I don't say they're right, mind ye; but I won't say they's wrong, neither."

"Oh, why did n't I meet this wretch when I was a child? Why did n't my father find a Helot like this, to tell lies before me, and frighten me with their horrid ugliness?" This was the thought that flashed through me as I listened. I felt, besides, that such stupid, purposeless inventions corrupted and blunted the taste for graceful narrative, just in the same way that an undeserving recipient of charity offends the pleasure of real benevolence.

"May I ask, Captain Rogers, what is the fare?" said I, with a bland courtesy.

"That depends upon the man, sir. If you was Ramsam Can-tanker-abad, I'd say five hundred gold pagodas. If

you was a Cockney stripling, with a fresh-water face, and a spunyarn whisker, I'd call it a matter of seven or eight pound."

"And you sail at eight?"

"To the minute. When Bob Rogers says eight o'clock, the first turn of the paddles will be the first stroke of the hour."

"Then book me, pray, for a berth; and, for surety's sake, I'll go aboard to-night."

"Meet me, then, here, at ten o'clock, and I'll take you off in my gig, an honor to be proud on, my lad; but as Joe's friend, I'll do it."

I bowed my acknowledgments and went off, neither delighted with my new acquaintance, nor myself for the patience I had shown him. After all, I had secured an early passage, and was thus able to show Kate Herbert that I was not going to let the grass grow under my feet this time, and that she might reckon on my zeal to serve her in future. As I retraced my road to the cottage, I forgot all about Captain Rogers, and only thought of Kate, and the interests that were hers. It was next to a certainty that her father was yet alive; but how to find him in a strange land, with a feigned name, and most probably with every aid and appliance to complete his disguise! It was, doubtless, a noble enterprise to devote oneself for such as she was, but not very hopeful withal; and then I went over various plans for my future guidance: what I should do if I fell sick? what if my money failed me? what if I were waylaid by Arabs, or carried away to some fearful region in the mountains, and made to feed a pet alligator or a domestic boa-constrictor? I hoped sincerely that I was overestimating my possible perils, but it was wise to give a large margin to the unknown; and so I did not curb myself in the least.

As I entered the grounds, the night was falling, and I could see that the lamps were already lighted in the drawing-room. What surprised me, however, was to see a very smart groom, well mounted, and leading another horse up and down before the door. There was, evidently, a visitor within, and I felt indisposed to enter till he had

gone away. My curiosity, however, prompted me to ask the groom the name of his master, and he replied, "The Honorable Captain Buller."

The very essence of all jealousy is that it is unreasoning. It is well known that husbands — that much-believing and much-belied class — always suspect every one but the right man; and now, without the faintest clew to a suspicion, I grew actually sick with jealousy!

Nor was it altogether blamable in me, for as I looked through the uncurtained window, I could see the Captain, a fine-looking, rather tigerish sort of fellow, standing with his back to the fireplace, while he talked to Miss Herbert, who sat some distance off at a work-table. There was in his air that amount of jaunty ease and self-possession that said, "I'm at home here; in this fortress I hold the chief command." There was about him, too, the tone of an assumed superiority, which, when displayed by a man towards a woman, takes the most offensive of all possible aspects.

As he talked, he moved at last towards a window, and, opening it, held out his hand to feel if it were raining.

"I hope," cried he, "you'll not send me back with a refusal; her Ladyship counts upon you as the chief ornament of her ball."

"We never do go to balls, sir," was the dry response.

"But make this occasion the exception. If you only knew how lamentably we are off for pretty people, you'd pity us. Such garrison wives and daughters are unknown to the oldest inhabitant of the island. Surely Mrs. Keats will be quite well by Wednesday, and she'll not be so cruel as to deny you to us for this once."

"I can but repeat my excuses, — I never go out."

"If you say so, I think I'll abandon all share in the enterprise. It was a point of honor with me to persuade you; in fact, I pledged myself to succeed, and if you really persist in a refusal, I'll just pitch all these notes in the fire, and go off yachting till the whole thing is over." And with this he drew forth a mass of notes from his sabretache, and proceeded to con over the addresses: "'Mrs. Hilyard,' 'Mr. Barnes,' 'Mr. Clintosh,' 'Lady Bladgen.' Oh, Lady

Blagden! Why, it would be worth while coming only to see her and Sir John; and here are the Crosbys too; and what have we here! Oh! this is a note from Grey. You don't know my brother Grey, — he'd amuse you immensely. Just listen to this, by way of a letter of introduction: —

“‘DEAR GEORGE, — Cherish the cove that will hand you this note as the most sublime Snob I have ever met in all my home and foreign experiences. In a large garrison like yours, you can have no difficulty in finding fellows to give him a field-day. I commit him, therefore, to your worthy keeping, to dine him, draw him forth, and pitch him out of the window when you've done with him. No harm if it is from the topmost story of the highest barrack in Malta. His name is Potts, — seriously and truthfully Potts. Birth, parentage, and belongings all unknown to

“‘Yours ever,’

“‘GREY BULLER.’”

“You are unfortunate, sir, in confiding your correspondence to me,” said Kate, rising from her seat, “for that gentleman is a friend — a sincere and valued friend — of my own, and you could scarcely have found a more certain way to offend me than to speak of him slightly.”

“You can't mean that you know him — ever met him?”

“I know him and respect him, and I will not listen to one word to his disparagement. Nay, more, sir, I will feel myself at liberty, if I think it fitting, to tell Mr. Potts the honorable mode in which your brother has discharged the task of an introduction, its good faith, and gentlemanlike feeling.”

“Pray, let us have him at the mess first. Don't spoil our sport till we have at least one evening out of him.”

But she did not wait for him to finish his speech, and left the room.

It is but fair to own he took his reverses with great coolness; he tightened his sword-belt, set his cap on his head before the glass, stroked down his moustache, and then, lighting a cigar, swaggered off to the door with the lounging swing of his order.

As for myself, I hastened back to the town, and with such speed that I traversed the mile in something like thir-

teen minutes. I had no very clear or collected plan of action, but I resolved to ask Captain Rogers to be my friend, and see me through this conjuncture. He had just dined as I entered the coffee-room, and consented to have his brandy-and-water removed to my bedroom while I opened my business with him.

I will not, at this eleventh hour of revelations, inflict upon my reader the details, but simply be satisfied to state that I found the skipper far more practical than I looked for. He evidently, besides, had a taste for these sort of adventures, and prided himself on his conduct of them. "Go back now, and eat your dinner comfortably with your friends; leave everything to me, and I promise you one thing, — the 'Cyclops' shall not get full steam up till we have settled this small transaction."

CHAPTER XLVII.

MY DUELLING AMBITION AGAIN DISAPPOINTED.

THOUGH I was a few minutes late for dinner, Miss Herbert did not chide me for delay. She was charming in her reception of me; nor was the fascination diminished to me by feeling with what generous warmth she had defended and upheld me.

There is a marvellous charm in the being defended by one you love, and of whose kind feeling towards you you had never dared to assure yourself till the very moment that confirmed it. I don't know if I ever felt in such spirits in my life. Not that I was gay or light-hearted so much as happy, — happy in the sense of a self-esteem I had not known till then. And what a spirit of cordial familiarity was there now between us! She spoke to me of her daily life, its habits and even of its trials; not complainingly nor fretfully, — far from it, — but in a way to imply that these were the burdens meted out to all, and that none should arrogantly imagine he was to escape the lot of his fellows. And then we talked of the Croftons, of whom she was curious to hear details, — their ages, appearance, manner, and so on; lastly, how I came to know them, and thus imperceptibly led me to tell of myself and of my story. I am sure that we each of us had enough of care upon our hearts, and yet none would have ever guessed it to have seen how joyously and merrily we laughed over some of the incidents of my checkered career. She bantered me, too, on the feeble and wayward impulses by which I had suffered myself to be moved, and gravely asked me, had I accomplished any single one of all the objects I had set before my mind in starting.

Far more earnestly, however, did we discuss the future. She heard with joy that I had already secured a passage for

Constantinople, and declared that she could not dismiss from her mind the impression that I was destined to aid their return to happiness and prosperity. I liked the notion, too, of there being a fate in our first meeting; a fate in that acquaintanceship with the Croftons, which gave the occasion to seek her out again; and, last of all, if it might be so, a fate in the influence I was to exercise over their fortunes. I was so absorbed in these pleasant themes that I, with as little of the lion in my heart as any man breathing, never once thought of the quarrel and its impending consequences. How my heart beat as her soft breath fanned me while she spoke! As she was telling me when and from whence I was to write to her, the servant came to say that a gentleman outside begged to see Mr. Potts. I hurried to the hall.

"Not come to disturb you, Potts," said the skipper, in a brisk tone; "only thought it best to make your mind easy. It's all right."

"A thousand thanks, Captain," said I, warmly. "I knew when the negotiation was in your hands it would be so."

"Yes; his friend, a Major Colesby, boggled a bit at first. Could n't see the thing in the light I put it. Asked very often 'who were you?' asked, too, 'who I was?' Good that! it made me laugh. Rather late in the day, I take it, to ask who Bob Rogers is! But in the end, as I said, it all comes right, quite right."

"And his apology was full, ample, and explicit? Was it in writing, Rogers? I'd like it in writing."

"Like what in writing?"

"His apology, or explanation, or whatever you like to call it."

"Who ever spoke of such a thing? Who so much as dreamed of it? Haven't I told you the affair is all right? and what does all right mean, eh?—what does it mean?"

"I know what it ought to mean," said I, angrily.

"So do I, and so do most men in this island, sir. It means twelve paces under the Battery wall, fire together, and as many shots as the aggrieved asks for. That's all right, is n't it?"

"In one sense it is so," said I, with a mock composure.

"Well, that's the only sense I ever meant to consider it by. Go back now to your tea, or your sugar-and-water, or whatever it is; and when you come home to-night, step into my room, and we'll have a cosey chat and a cigar. There's one or two trifling things that I don't understand in this affair, and I put my own explanation on them, and maybe it ain't the right one. Not that it signifies *now*, you perceive, because you are here to the fore, and can set them right. But as by this time to-morrow you might be where — I won't mention — we may as well put them straight this evening."

"I'll beat you up, depend upon it," said I, affecting a slap-dash style. "I can't tell you how glad I am to have fallen into your hands, Rogers. You suit me exactly."

"Well, it's more than I expected when I saw you first, and I kept saying to myself, 'Whatever could have persuaded Joe to send me a creature like that?' To tell you the truth, I thought you were in the cheap funeral line."

"Droll dog!" said I, while my fingers were writhing and twisting with passion.

"Not that it's fair to take a fellow by his looks. I'm aware of that, Potts. But go back to the parlor; that's the second time the maid has come out to see what keeps you. Go back, and enjoy yourself; maybe you won't have so pleasant an opportunity soon again."

This was the parting speech of the wretch as he buttoned the collar of his coat, and with a short nod bade me good-bye, and left me.

"Why did you not ask your friend to take a cup of tea with us?" said Kate, as I re-entered the drawing-room.

"Oh! it was the skipper, a rough sort of creature, not exactly made for drawing-room life; besides, he only came to ask me a question."

"I hope it was not a very unpleasant one, for you look pale and anxious."

"Nothing of the kind; a mere formal matter about my baggage."

It was no use; from that moment, I was the most miserable of mankind. What availed it to speculate any longer

on the future? How could I interest myself in what years might bring forth? Hours, and a very few of them, were all that were left to me. Poor girl! how tenderly she tried to divert my sorrow! She, most probably, ascribed it to the prospect of our speedy separation; and with delicacy and tact, she tried to trace out some faint outlines of what painters call "extreme distance," — a sort of future where all the skies would be rose-colored and all the mountains blue. I am sure, if a choice had been given me at that instant, I would rather have been a courageous man than the greatest genius in the universe. *I* knew better what was before. At last it came to ten o'clock, and I arose to say good-bye. I found it very hard not to fall upon her neck and say, "Don't be angry with poor Potts; this is his last as it is his first embrace."

"Wear that ring for me and for my sake," said she, giving me one from her finger; "don't refuse me, — it has no value save what you may attach to it from having been mine."

Oh dear! what a gulp it cost me not to say, "I'll never take it off while I live," and then add, "which will be about eight hours and a half more."

When I got into the open air, I ran as if a pack of wolves were in pursuit of me. I cannot say why; but the rapid motion served to warm my blood, so that when I reached the hotel, I felt more assured and more resolute.

Rogers was asleep, and so soundly that I had to pull the pillow from beneath his head before I could awaken him; and when I had accomplished the feat, either the remote effect of his brandy-and-water or his drowsiness had so obscured his faculties, that all he could mumble out was, "Hit him where he can't be spliced, — hit him where they can't splice him!" I tried for a long time to recall him to sense and intelligence, but I got nothing from him save the one inestimable precept; and so I went to my room, and, throwing myself on my bed in my cloak, prepared for a night of gloomy retrospect and gloomier anticipation; but, odd enough, I was asleep the moment I lay down.

"Get up, old fellow," cried Rogers, shaking me violently,

just as the dawn was breaking; "we're lucky if we can get aboard before they catch us."

"What do you mean?" said I. "What's happened?"

"The Governor has got wind of our shindy, and put all the red-coats in arrest, and ordered the police to nab us too."

"Bless him! bless him!" muttered I.

"Ay, so say I. He be blessed!" cried he, catching up my words. "But let us make off through the garden; my gig is down in the offing, and they'll pull in when they hear my whistle. Ain't it provoking, — ain't it enough to make a man swear?"

"I have no words for what I feel, Rogers," said I, bustling about to collect my stray articles through the room. "If I ever chance upon that Governor — he has only five years of it — I believe —"

"Come along! I see the boat coming round the point yonder." And with this we slipped noiselessly down the stairs, down the street, and gained the jetty.

"Steam up?" asked the skipper, as he jumped into the gig.

"Ay, ay, sir; and we're short on the anchor too."

In less than half an hour we were under weigh, and I don't think I ever admired a land prospect receding from view with more intense delight than I did that, my last glimpse of Malta.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FINAL ADVENTURES AND SETTLEMENT.

OUR voyage had nothing remarkable to record; we reached Constantinople in due course, and during the few days the "Cyclops" remained, I had abundant time to discover that there was no trace of any one resembling him I sought for. By the advice of Rogers, I accompanied him to Odessa. There, too, I was not more fortunate; and though I instituted the most persevering inquiries, all I could learn was that some Americans were employed by the Russian Government in raising the frigates sunk at Sebastopol, and that it was not impossible an Englishman, such as I described, might have met an engagement amongst them. At all events, one of the coasting craft was already at Odessa, and I went on board of her to make my inquiry. I learned from the mate, who was a German, that they had come over on rather a strange errand, which was to convey a corps of circus people to Balaklava. The American contractor at that place, being in want of some amusement, had arranged with these people to give some weeks' performances there, but that, from an incident that had just occurred, the project had failed. This was no less than the elopement of the chief dancer, a young girl of great beauty, with a young prince of Bavaria. It was rumored that he had married her, but my informant gave little credence to this version, and averred that he had bought, not only herself, but a favorite Old Arab horse she rode, for thirty thousand piastres. I asked eagerly where the others of the corps were to be found, and heard they had crossed over to Simoom, all broken up and disjointed, the chief clown having died of grief after the girl's flight.

If I heard this tale rudely narrated, and not always with the sort of comment that went with my sympathies, I sorrowed sincerely over it, for I guessed upon whom these events had fallen, and recognized poor old Vaterchen and the dark-eyed Tintefleck.

"You've fallen into the black melancholies these some days back," said Rogers to me. "Rouse up, and take a cruise with me. I'm going over to Balaklava with these steam-boilers, and then to Sinope, and so back to the Bosphorus. Come aboard to-night, it will do you good."

I took his counsel, and at noon next day we dropped anchor at Balaklava. We had scarcely passed our "health papers," when a boat came out with a message to inquire if we had a doctor on board who could speak English, for the American contractor had fallen from one of the scaffolds that morning, and was lying dreadfully injured up at Sebastopol, but unable to explain himself to the Russian surgeons. I was not without some small skill in medicine; and, besides, out of common humanity, I felt it my duty to set out, and at about sunset I reached Sebastopol.

Being supposed to be a physician of great skill and eminence, I was treated by all the persons about with much deference, and, after very few minutes' delay, introduced into the room where the sick man lay. He had ordered that when an English doctor could be found, they were to leave them perfectly alone together; so that, as I entered, the door was closed immediately, and I found myself alone by the bedside of the sufferer. The curtain was closely drawn across the windows, and it was already dusk, so that all I could discover was the figure of a man, who lay breathing very heavily, and with the irregular action that implies great pain.

"Are you English?" said he, in a strong, full voice. "Well, feel that pulse, and tell me if it means sinking; I suspect it does."

I took his hand and laid my finger on the artery. It was beating furiously, — far too fast to count, but not weakly nor faintly.

"No," said I; "this is fever, but not debility."

"I don't want subtleties," rejoined he, roughly. "I want

to know am I dying? Draw the curtain there, open the window full, and have a look at me."

I did as he bade me, and returned to the bedside. It was all I could do not to cry out with astonishment; for, though terribly disfigured by his wounds, his eyes actually covered by the torn scalp that hung over them, I saw that it was Harpar lay before me, his large reddish beard now matted and clotted with blood.

"Well, what's the verdict?" cried he, sternly; "don't keep me in suspense."

"I do not perceive any grave symptoms so far —"

"No cant, my good friend, no cant! It's out of place just now. Be honest, and say what is it to be, — live or die?"

"So far as I can judge, I say, live."

"Well, then, set about the repairs at once. Ask for what you want, — they'll bring it."

Deeming it better not to occasion any shock whatever to a man in his state, I forbore declaring who I was, and set about my office with what skill I could.

With the aid of a Russian surgeon, who spoke German well, I managed to dress the wounds and bandage the fractured arm, during which the patient never spoke once, nor, indeed, seemed to be at all concerned in what was going on.

"You can stay here, I hope," said he to me, when all was finished. "At least, you'll see me through the worst of it. I can afford to pay, and pay well."

"I'll stay," said I, imitating his own laconic way; and no more was said.

Now, though it was not my intention to pass myself off for a physician, or derive any, even the smallest advantage from the assumption of such a character, I saw that, remote as the poor sufferer was from his friends and country, and totally destitute of even companionship, it would have been cruel to desert him until he was sufficiently recovered to be left with servants.

From his calm composure, and the self-control he was able to exercise, I had formed a far too favorable opinion of his case. When I saw him first the inflammatory symp-

toms had not yet set in; so that at my next visit I found him in a high fever, raving wildly. In his wanderings he imagined himself ever directing some gigantic enterprise, with hundreds of men at his command, whose efforts he was cheering or chiding alternately. The indomitable will of a most resolute nature was displayed in all he said; and though his bodily sufferings must have been intense, he only alluded to them to show how little power they had to arrest his activity. His ever-recurring cry was, "It can be done, men! It can be done! See that we do it!"

I own that, even though stretched on a sick-bed and raving madly, this man's unquenchable energy impressed me greatly; and I often fancied to myself what must have been the resources of such a bold spirit in sad contrast to a nature pliant and yielding like mine. To the violence of the first access, there soon succeeded the far more dangerous state of low fever, through which I never left him. Care and incessant watching could alone save him, and I devoted myself to the last with the resolve to make this effort the first of a new and changed existence.

Day and night in the sick-room, I lost appetite and strength, while an unceasing care preyed upon me and deprived me even of rest. The very vacillations of the sick man's malady had affected my nerves, rendering me over-anxious, so that just as he had passed the great crisis of the malady, I was stricken down with it myself.

My first day of convalescence, after seven weeks of fever, found me sitting at a little window that looked upon the sea, or rather the harbor of Sebastopol, where two frigates and some smaller vessels were at anchor. A group of lighters and such unpicturesque craft occupied another part of the scene, engaged, as it seemed, in operations for raising other vessels. It was in gazing for a long while at these, and guessing their occupation, that I learned to trace out the past, and why and how I had come to be sitting there. Every morning the German servant who tended me through my illness used to bring me the "Herr Baron's" compliments to know how I was, and now he came to say that as the "Herr Baron" was able to walk so far, he begged that he might be permitted to come and pay me a visit. I was

aware of the Russian custom of giving titles to all who served the Government in positions of high trust, and was therefore not astonished when the announcement of the "Herr Baron" was followed by the entrance of Harpar, who, sadly reduced, and leaning on a crutch, made his way slowly to where I sat. I attempted to rise to receive him, but he cried out, half sternly, —

"Sit still! we are neither of us in good trim for ceremony."

He motioned to the servants to leave us alone; then laying his wasted hand in mine, for we were each too weak to grasp the other, he said, —

"I know all about it. It was you saved my life, and risked your own to do it."

I muttered out some unmeaning words — I know not well what — about duty and the like.

"I don't care a brass button for the motive. You stood to me like a man." As he said this, he looked hard at me, and, shading the light with his hand, peered into my face. "Have n't we met before this? Is not your name Potts?"

"Yes, and you're Harpar."

He reddened, but so slightly that but for the previous paleness of his sickly cheek it would not have been noticeable.

"I have often thought about *you*," said he, musingly. "This is not the only service you have done me; the first was at Lindau, — mayhap you have forgotten it. You lent me two hundred florins, and, if I'm not much mistaken, when you were far from being rich yourself."

He leaned his head on his hand, and seemed to have fallen into a musing fit.

"And, after all," said I, "of the best turn I ever did you, you have never heard in your life, and, what is more, might never hear, if not from myself. Do you remember an altercation on the road to Feldkirch, with a man called Rigges?"

"To be sure I do; he smashed the small-bone of this arm for me; but I gave worse than I got. They never could find that bullet I sent into his side, and he died of it at Palermo. But what share in this did you bear?"

"Not the worst nor the best; but I was imprisoned for a twelvemonth in your place."

"Imprisoned for *me*?"

"Yes; they assumed that I was Harpar, and as I took no steps to undeceive them, there I remained till they seemed to have forgotten all about me."

Harpar questioned me closely and keenly as to the reasons that prompted this act of mine, — an act all the more remarkable, as, to use his own words, "We were men who had no friendship for each other, actually strangers; and," added he, significantly, "the sort of fellows who, somehow, do not usually 'hit it off' together. You a man of leisure, with your own dreamy mode of life; I, a hard worker, who could not enjoy idleness; and in this sense, far more likely to hold each other cheaply than otherwise."

I attempted to account for this piece of devotion as best I might, but not very successfully, since I was only endeavoring to explain what I really did not well understand myself. Nor could a vague desire to do something generous, merely because it *was* generous, satisfy the practical intelligence of him who heard me.

"Well," said he, at last, "all that machinery you have described is so new and strange to me, I can tell nothing as to how it ought to work; but I'm as grateful to you as a man can be for a service which he could not have rendered *himself*, nor has the slightest notion of what could have prompted *you* to do. Now, let me hear by what chance you came here?"

"You must listen to a long story to learn that," said I; and as he declared that he had nothing more pressing to do with his time, I began, almost as I have begun with my reader. On my first mention of Crofton, he asked me to repeat the name; and when I spoke of meeting Miss Herbert at the Milford station, he slightly moved his chair, as if to avoid the strong light from the window; but from that moment till I finished, he never interrupted me by a word, nor interposed a question.

"And it was she gave you that old seal-ring I see on your finger?" said he, at last.

"Yes," said I. "How came you to guess that?"

"Because *I* gave it to her the day she was sixteen! I am her father."

I drew a long breath, and could only clutch his arm with astonishment, without being able to speak.

"It's all well-known in England, now. Everybody has been paid in full, my creditors have met in a body, and signed a request to me to come back and recommence business. They have done more; they have bought up the lease of the Foundry, and sent it out to me. Ay, and old Elkanah's mortgage, too, is redeemed, and I don't owe a shilling."

"You must have worked hard to accomplish all this?"

"Pretty hard, no doubt. You remember those little boats with the holes in 'em at Lindau. *They* did the business for me. I was fool enough at that time to imagine that you had got a clew to my discovery, and were after me to pick up all the details. I ought to have known better! It was easy enough to see that *you* could have no head for anything with a 'tough bone' in it. Light, thoughtless creatures of *your* kind are never dangerous anywhere!"

I was not quite sure whether I was expected to return thanks for this speech in my favor, and therefore only made some very unintelligible mutterings.

"There's only one liner now to be raised, and all the guns are already out of her, but I can return to-morrow. I am free; my contract is completed; and the 'Ignatief' sloop-of-war is at my orders at Balaklava to convey me to any port I please in Europe."

He said this so boastfully and so vaingloriously that I really felt Potts in his humility was not the smaller man of the two. Nor, perhaps, was my irritation the less, at seeing how little surprise our singular meeting had caused him, and how much he regarded all I had done in his behalf as being ordinary and commonplace services. But, perhaps, the *coup de grace* of my misery came as he said, —

"Though I forwarded that ten-pound note you lent me to Rome, perhaps you'll like to have it now. If you need any more, say so."

My heart was in my mouth, and I felt that I'd have died of starvation rather than accept the humblest benefit at his hands.

"Very well," said he to my refusal; "all the better that you've no need of cash, for, to tell the truth, Potts, you're not much of a doctor, nor are you very remarkable as a man of genius; and it is a kind thing of Providence when such fellows as you are born with even a 'pewter spoon' in their mouths."

I nearly choked, but I said nothing.

"If you'd like me to land you anywhere in the Levant, or down towards the Spanish coast, only tell me."

"No, nothing of the kind. I'm going north; I'm going to Moscow, to Tobolsk; I'm going to Persia and Astrakhan," said I, in wildest confusion.

"Well, I can give you a capital travelling-cloak — it's one of those buntas they make in the Banat, and you'll need it, for they have fearfully severe cold in those countries."

With this, and not waiting my resolute refusal, he rose, hobbled out of the room, and I — ay, there's no concealing it — burst out a-crying!

Weak and sick as I was, I procured an "araba" that night, and, without one word of adieu, set out for Krim.

* * * * *

It was about two years after this — my father had died in the interval, leaving me a small but sufficient fortune to live on, and I had just arrived in Paris, after a long desultory ramble through the east of Europe — I was standing one morning early in one of the small alleys of the Champs-Élysées, watching with half-listless curiosity the various grooms as they passed to exercise their horses in the Bois de Boulogne. Group after group passed me of those magnificent animals in which Paris is now more than the rival of London, and at length I was struck by the appearance of a very smartly dressed groom, who led along beside him a small-sized horse, completely sheeted and shrouded from view. Believing that this must prove some creature of rare beauty, an Arab of purest descent, I followed them as they went, and at last overtook them.

The groom was English, and by my offer of a cigar, somewhat better than the one he was smoking, he was very willing to satisfy my curiosity.

"I suppose he has Arab blood in him," said he, half contemptuously; "but he's forty years old now if he's a day. What they keep him for I don't know, but they make as much work about him as if he was a Christian; and as for myself, I have nothing else to do than walk him twice a day to his exercise, and take care that his oats are well bruised and mixed with linseed, for he has n't a tooth left."

"I suppose his master is some very rich man, who can afford himself a caprice like this."

"For the matter of money, he has enough of it. He is the Prince Ernest Maximilian of Würtemberg, and, except the Emperor, has the best stable in all Paris. But I don't think that *he* cares much for the old horse; it's the *Princess* likes him, and she constantly drives out to the wood here, and when we come to a quiet spot, where there are no strangers, she makes me take off all the body-clothes and the hood, and she'll get out of the carriage and pat him. And he knows her, that he does! and lifts up that old leg of his when she comes towards him, and tries to whinny too. But here she comes now, and it won't do if I'm seen talking to you; so just drop behind, sir, and never notice me."

I crossed the road, and had but reached the opposite path-way, when a carriage stopped, and the old horse drew up beside it. After a word or two, the groom took off the hood, and there was Blondel! But my amazement was lost in the greater shock that the Princess, whose jewelled hand held out the sugar to him, was no other than Catinka!

I cannot say with what motive I was impelled, — perhaps the action was too quick for either, — but I drew nigh to the carriage, and, raising my hat respectfully, asked if her highness would deign to remember an old acquaintance.

"I am unfortunate enough, sir, not to be able to recall you," said she, in the most perfect Parisian French.

"My name you may have forgotten, madam, but scarcely so either our first meeting at Schaffhausen, or our last at Bregenz."

"These are all riddles to me, sir; and I am sure you are too well bred to persist in an error after you have recognized it to be such." With a cold smile and a haughty bow,

she motioned the coachman to drive on, and I saw her no more.

Stung to the very quick, but yet not without a misgiving that I might be possibly mistaken, I hurried to the police department, where the list of strangers was preserved. By sending in my card I was admitted to see one of the chiefs of the department, who politely informed me that the princess was totally unknown as to family, and not included in the Gotha Almanack.

"May I ask," said he, as I prepared to retire, "if this letter here — it has been with us for more than a year — is for your address? It came with an enclosure covering any possible expense in reaching your address, and has lain here ever since."

"Yes," said I, "my name is Algernon Sydney Potts."

Strange are the changes and vicissitudes of life! Just as I stood there, shocked and overwhelmed with one trait of cold ingratitude, I found a letter from Kate (she who was once Kate Herbert), telling me how they had sent messengers after me through Europe, and begging, if these lines should ever reach me, to come to them in Wales. "My father loves you, my mother longs to know you, and none can be more eager to thank you than your friend Kate Whalley."

I set off for England that night — I left for Wales the next morning — and I have never quitted it since that day.

THE END.

THAT BOY OF NORCOTT'S

TO
BARON EMILE ERLANGER.

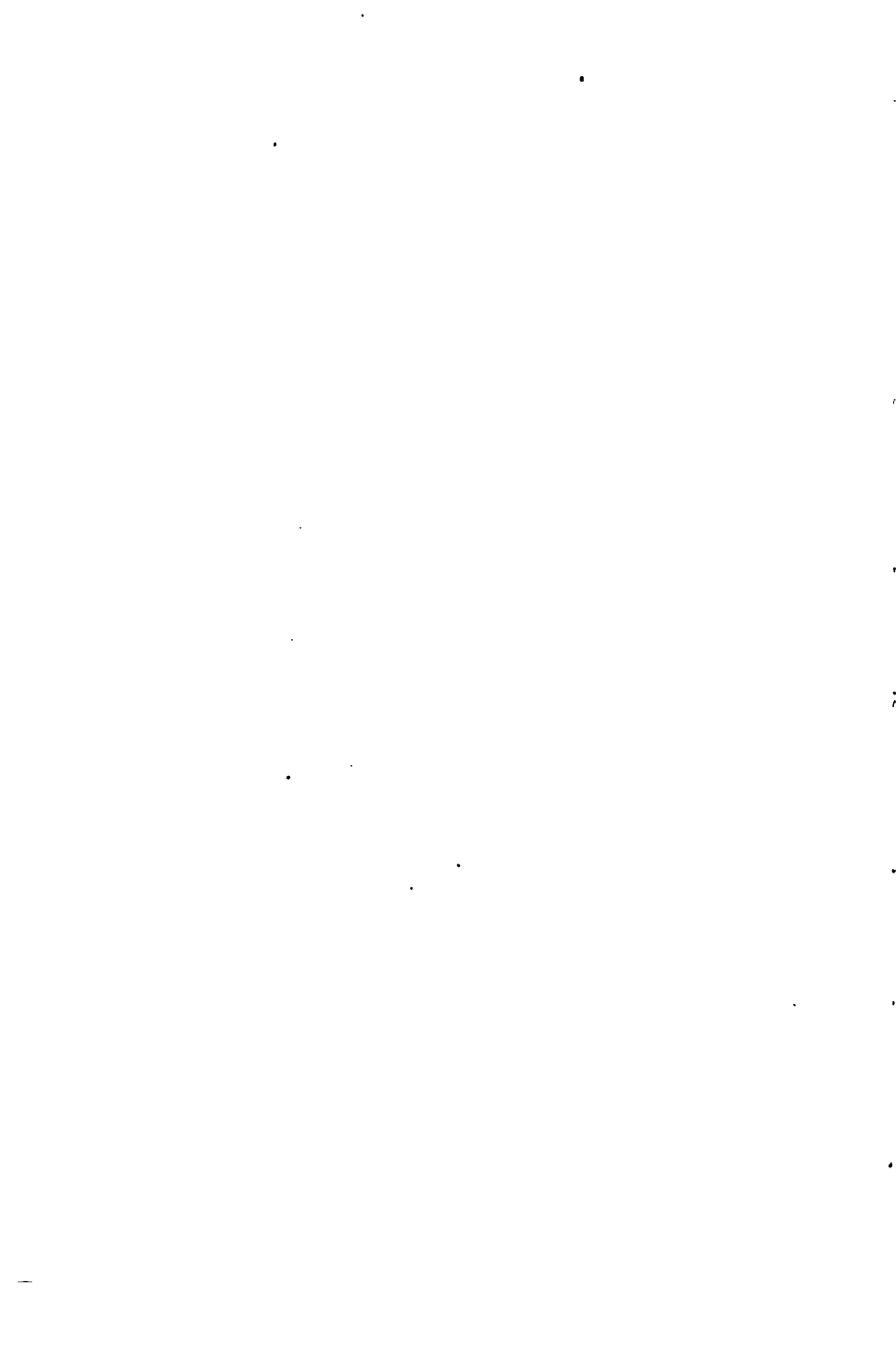
MY DEAR ERLANGER, — Through the many anxieties which beset me while I was writing this story, your name was continually recurring, and always with some act of kindness, or some proof of affection. Let me, then, in simple gratitude dedicate to you a volume of which, in a measure, you stand sponsor, and say to the world at large what I have so often said to my own,

How sincerely and heartily I am

Your friend,

CHARLES LEVER.

TRIESTE, February 20th, 1869.



THAT BOY OF NORCOTT'S.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRIAL.

SOME years ago there was a trial in Dublin, which, partly because the parties in the cause were in a well-to-do condition of life, and partly because the case in some measure involved the interests of the two conflicting Churches, excited considerable sensation and much comment.

The contention was the right to the guardianship of a boy whose father and mother had ceased to live together. On their separation they had come to a sort of amicable arrangement that the child — then seven years old — should live alternate years with each; and though the mother's friends warmly urged her not to consent to a plan so full of danger to her child, and so certain to result in the worst effects on his character, the poor woman, whose rank in life was far inferior to her husband's, yielded, partly from habit of deference to his wishes, and more still because she believed, in refusing these terms, she might have found herself reduced to accept even worse ones. The marriage had been unfortunate in every way. Sir Roger Norcott had accompanied his regiment, the —th Dragoons, to Ireland, where some violent disturbances in the south had called for an increase of military force. When the riots had been suppressed, the troops, broken up into small detachments, were quartered through the counties, as opportunity and convenience served; Norcott's troop — for he was a captain

— being stationed in that very miserable and poverty-stricken town called Macroon. Here the dashing soldier, who for years had been a Guardsman, mixing in all the gayeties of a London life, passed days and weeks of dreary despondency. His two subs, who happened to be sons of men in trade, he treated with a cold and distant politeness, but never entered into their projects, nor accepted their companionship; and though they messed together each day, no other intimacy passed between them than the courtesies of the table.

It chanced that while thus hipped, and out of sorts, sick of the place and the service that had condemned him to it, he made acquaintance with a watchmaker, when paying for some slight service, and subsequently with his daughter, a very pretty, modest-looking, gentle girl of eighteen. The utter vacuity of his life, the tiresome hours of barrack-room solitude, the want of some one to talk to him, but, still more, of some one to listen, — for he liked to talk, and talked almost well, — led him to pass more than half his days and all his evenings at their house. Nor was the fact that his visits had become a sort of town scandal without its charm for a man who actually pined for a sensation, even though painful; and there was, too, an impertinence that, while declining the society of the supposed upper classes of the neighborhood, he found congenial companionship with these humble people, had a marvellous attraction for a man who had no small share of resentfulness in his nature, and was seldom so near being happy as when flouting some prejudice or outraging some popular opinion.

It had been his passion through life to be ever doing or saying something that no one could have anticipated. For the pleasure of astonishing the world, no sacrifice was too costly; and whether he rode, or shot, or played, or yachted, his first thought was notoriety. An ample fortune lent considerable aid to this tendency; but every year's extravagance was now telling on his resources, and he was forced to draw on his ingenuity where before he needed but to draw on his banker.

There was nothing that his friends thought less likely than that he would marry, except that, if he should, his

wife would not be a woman of family: to bowl over both of these beliefs together, he married the watchmaker's daughter, and Mary Owen became a baronet's bride.

Perhaps — I'm not very sure of even that — her marriage gave her one entire day of unbroken happiness, — I do not believe it gave her a week, and I know it did not a month. Whether it was that his friends were less shocked than he had hoped for, or that the shock wore out sooner, he was frantic at the failure of his grand coup, and immediately set about revenging on his unhappy wife all the disappointment she had caused him. After a series of cruelties — some of which savored of madness — but which she bore without complaint, or even murmur, he bethought him that her religious belief offered a groundwork for torment which he had hitherto neglected. He accordingly determined to make his profession to the Church of Rome, and to call on her to follow. This she stoutly refused; and he declared that they should separate. The menace had no longer a terror for her. She accepted whatever terms he was pleased to dictate; she only stipulated as to the child, and for him but to the extent we have already seen. The first year after the separation the boy passed with his father; the second he spent with his mother. At the end of the third year, when her turn again came round, Sir Roger refused to part with him; and when reminded of his promise, coarsely replied that his boy, above all things, must be "a gentleman," and that he was now arrived at an age when association with low and vulgar people would attach a tone to his mind and a fashion to his thoughts that all the education in the world would not eradicate; and that rather than yield to such a desecration, he would litigate the matter to the last shilling of his estate. Such was the cause before the Barons of the Exchequer: the mother pleading that her child should be restored to her; the father opposing the demand that the mother's habits and associates were not in accordance with the prospects of one who should inherit title and fortune; and, last of all, that the boy was devotedly attached to him, and bore scarcely a trace of affection for his mother.

So painful were the disclosures that came out during

the trial, so subversive of every feeling that pertains to the sanctity of the family, and so certain to work injuriously on the character of the child whose interests were at stake, that the judge made more than one attempt to arrest the proceedings and refer the case to arbitration, but Sir Roger would not agree to this. He was once more in his element, he was before the world, — the newspapers were full of him, and, better than all, in attack and reprobation. He had demanded to be put on the table as a witness, and they who saw, it is said, never forgot the insolent defiance of public opinion that he on that day displayed; how boldly he paraded opinions in opposition to every sense of right and justice, and how openly he avowed his principle of education to be — to strip off from youth every delusion as to the existence of truth and honor in life, and to teach a child, from his earliest years, that trickery and falsehood were the daily weapons of mankind, and that he who would not consent to be the dupe of his fellow-men must be their despot and their persecutor. If he had the satisfaction of outraging the feelings of all in court, and insulting every sense of propriety and decorum, he paid heavily for the brief triumph. The judge delivered a most stern denunciation of his doctrines, and declared that no case had ever come before the court where so little hesitation existed as to the judgment to be pronounced. The sentence was that, up to the age of twelve, the child was to be confided to the mother's charge; after which period the court would, on application, deliberate and determine on the future guardianship.

"Will you leave me, Digby?" asked the father; and his lips trembled, and his cheek blanched as he uttered the words. The boy sprang into his arms, and kissed him wildly and passionately; and the two clung to each other in close embrace, and their mingled sobs echoed through the now silent court. "You see, my Lord, you see —" cried the father; but the boy's struggles were choking him, and, with his own emotions, would not suffer him to continue. His sufferings were now real, and a murmur ran through the court that showed how public feeling was trembling in the balance. The bustle of a new cause that was coming on soon closed the scene. The child was handed

over to an officer of the court, while the mother's friends concerted together, and all was over.

Over as regarded the first act of a life-long drama; and ere the curtain rises, it only remains to say that the cause which that day decided was mine, and that I, who write this, was the boy "Digby Norcott."

CHAPTER II.

WITH MY MOTHER.

My mother lived in a little cottage at a place called the Green Lanes, about three miles from Dublin. The name was happily given, for on every side there were narrow roads overshadowed by leafy trees, which met above and gave only glimpses of sky and cloud through their feathery foliage. The close hedgerows of white or pink thorn limited the view on either side, and imparted a something of gloom to a spot whose silence was rarely broken, for it was not a rich man's neighborhood. They who frequented it were persons of small fortune, retired subalterns in the army, or clerks in public offices, and such like petty respectabilities who preferred to herd together, and make no contrasts of their humble means with larger, greater incomes.

Amongst the sensations I shall never forget — and which, while I write, are as fresh as the moment I first felt them — were my feelings when the car stopped opposite a low wicket, and Mr. McBride, the attorney, helped me down and said, "This is your home, Digby; your mother lives here." The next moment a pale but very handsome young woman came rushing down the little path and clasped me in her arms. She had dropped on her knees to bring her face to mine, and she kissed me madly and wildly, so that my cap fell off. "See how my frill is all rumbled," said I, unused as I was to such disconcerting warmth, and caring far more for my smart appearance than for demonstrations of affection. "Oh, darling, never mind it," sobbed she. "You shall have another and a nicer. I will make it myself, for my own boy, — for you are mine, Digby. You are mine, dearest, ain't you?"

"I am papa's boy," said I, doggedly.

"But you will love mamma too, Digby, won't you? — poor mamma, that has no one to love her, or care for her if you do not; and who will so love you in return, and do everything for you, — everything to make you happy, — happy and good, Digby."

"Then let us go back to Earls Court. It's far prettier than this, and there are great lions over the gateway, and wide steps up to the door. I don't like this. It looks so dark and dreary, — it makes me cry." And to prove it, I burst out into a full torrent of weeping, and my mother hung over me and sobbed too; and long after the car had driven away, we sat there on the grass weeping bitterly together, though there was no concert in our sorrow, nor any soul to our grief.

That whole afternoon was passed in attempts to comfort and caress me by my mother, and in petulant demands on my part for this or that luxury I had left behind me. I wanted my nice bed with the pink curtains, and my little tool-case. I wanted my little punt, my pony, my fishing-rod. I wanted the obsequious servants, who ran at my bidding, and whose respectful manner was a homage I loved to exact. Not one of these was forthcoming, and how could I believe her who soothingly told me that her love would replace them, and that her heart's affection would soon be dearer to me than all my toys and all the glittering presents that littered my room? "But I want my pony," I cried; "I want my little dog Fan, and I want to sit beside papa, and see him drive four horses, and he lets me whip them too, and *you* won't." And so I cried hysterically again, and in these fretful paroxysms I passed my evening.

The first week of my life there was to me — it still is to me — like a dream, — a sad, monotonous dream. Repulsed in every form, my mother still persisted in trying to amuse or interest me, and I either sat in moody silence, refusing all attention, or went off into passionate grief, sobbing as if my heart would break. "Let him cry his fill," said old Biddy the maid, — "let him cry his fill, and it will do him good." And I could have killed her on the spot as she said it.

If Biddy Cassidy really opined that a hearty fit of crying

would have been a good alternative for me, she ought not to have expressed the opinion in my presence, for there was that much of my father in me that quickly suggested resistance, and I at once resolved that, no matter what it might cost me, or by what other means I might find a vent for my grief, I'd cry no more. All my poor mother's caresses, all her tenderness, and all her watchful care never acted on my character with half the force or one-tenth of the rapidity that did this old hag's attempt to thwart and oppose me. Her system was, by a continual comparison between my present life and my past, to show how much better off I was now than in my former high estate, and by a travesty of all I had been used to, to pretend that anything like complaint from me would be sheer ingratitude. "Here's the pony, darlin', waitin' for you to ride him," she would say, as she would lay an old walking-stick beside my door; and though the blood would rush to my head at the insult, and something very nigh choking rise to my throat, I would master my passion and make no reply. This demeanor was set down to sulkiness, and Biddy warmly entreated my mother to suppress the temper it indicated, and, as she mildly suggested, "cut it out of me when I was young" — a counsel, I must own, she did not follow.

Too straitened in her means to keep a governess for me, and unwilling to send me to a school, my mother became my teacher herself; and, not having had any but the very commonest education, she was obliged to acquire in advance what she desired to impart. Many a night would she pore over the Latin Grammar, that she might be even one stage before *me* in the morning. Over and over did she get up the bit of geography that was to test my knowledge the next day; and in this way, while leading *me* on, she acquired, almost without being aware of it, a considerable amount of information. Her faculties were above the common, and her zeal could not be surpassed; so that, while I was stumbling and blundering over "Swaine's Sentences," she had read all Sallust's "Catiline," and most of the "Odes" of Horace; and long before I had mastered my German declensions, she was reading "Grimm's Stories" and Auerbach's "Village Sketches." Year after year went

over quietly, uneventfully. I had long ceased to remember my former life of splendor, or, if it recurred to me, it came with no more of reality than the events of a dream. One day, indeed, — I shall never forget it, — the past revealed itself before me with the vivid distinctness of a picture, and, I shame to say, rendered me unhappy and discontented for several days after. I was returning one afternoon from a favorite haunt, where I used to spend hours, — the old churchyard of Killester, a long-unused cemetery, with a ruined church beside it, — when four spanking chestnuts came to the foot of the little rise on which the ruin stood, and the servants, jumping down, undid the bearing-reins, to breathe the cattle up the ascent. It was my father was on the box; and as he skilfully brushed the flies from his horses with his whip, gently soothing the hot-mettled creatures with his voice, I bethought me of the proud time when I sat beside him, and when he talked to me of the different tempers of each horse in the team, instilling into me that interest and that love for them, as thinking sentient creatures, which gives the horse a distinct character to all who have learned thus to think of him from childhood. He never looked at me as he passed. How should he recognize the little boy in the gray linen blouse he was wont to see in black velvet with silver buttons? Perhaps I was not sorry he did not know me. Perhaps I felt it easier to fight my own shame alone than if it had been confessed and witnessed. At all events, the sight sent me home sad and depressed, no longer able to take pleasure in my usual pursuits, and turning from my toys and books with actual aversion.

Remembering how all mention of my father used to affect my mother long ago, seeing how painfully his mere name acted upon her, I forbore to speak of this incident, and buried it in my heart, to think and ruminate over when alone.

Time went on and on till I wanted but a few months of twelve, and my lessons were all but dropped, as my mother's mornings were passed either in letter-writing or in interviews with her lawyer. It was on the conclusion of one of these councils that Mr. McBride led me into the garden, and, seating me beside him on a bench, said, "I

have something to say to you, Digby; and I don't know that I'd venture to say it, if I had not seen that you are a thoughtful boy, and an affectionate son of the best mother that ever lived. You are old enough, besides, to have a right to know something about yourself and your future prospects, and it is for that I have come out to-day." And with this brief preface he told me the whole story of my father's and mother's marriage and separation; and how it came to pass that I had been taken from one to live with the other; and how the time was now drawing nigh—it wanted but two months and ten days—when I should be once more under my father's guidance, and totally removed from the influence of that mother who loved me so dearly.

"We might fight the matter in the courts, it is true," said he. "There are circumstances which might weigh with a judge—whether he'd remove you from a position of safety and advantage to one of danger and difficulty; but it would be the fight of a weak purse against a strong one, not to say that it would also be the struggle of a poor mother's heart against the law of the land; and I have at last persuaded her it would be wiser and safer not to embitter the relations with your father,—to submit to the inevitable; and not improbably you may be permitted to see her from time to time, and, at all events, to write to her." It took a long time for him to go through what I have so briefly set down here; for there were many pros and cons, and he omitted none of them; and while he studiously abstained from applying to my father any expression of censure or reprobation, he could not conceal from me that he regarded him as a very cold-hearted, unfeeling man, from whom little kindness could be expected, and to whom entreaty or petition would be lost time. I will not dwell on the impression this revelation produced on me, nor will I linger on the time that followed on it,—the very saddest of my life. Our lessons were stopped,—all the occupations that once filled the day ceased,—a mournful silence fell upon us, as though there was a death in the house; and there was, indeed, the death of that peaceful existence in which we had glided along for years, and we sat grieving over a time that was to return no more. My mother tried

to employ herself in setting my clothes in order, getting my books decently bound, and enabling me in every way to make a respectable appearance in that new life I was about to enter on; but her grief usually overcame her in these attempts, and she would hang in tears over the little trunk that recalled every memory she was so soon to regard as the last traces of her child. Biddy, who had long, for years back, ceased to torment or annoy me, came back with an arrear of bitterness to her mockeries and sneers. "I was going to be a lord, and I'd not know the mother that nursed me if I saw her in the street! Fine clothes and fine tratement was more to me than love and affection; signs on it, I was turning my back on my own mother, and going to live with the blackguard" — she did n't mince the word — "that left her to starve." These neatly turned compliments met me at every moment, and by good fortune served to arm me with a sort of indignant courage that carried me well through all my perils.

To spare my poor mother the pain of parting, Mr. McBride — I cannot say how judiciously — contrived that I should be taken out for a drive and put on board the packet bound for Holyhead, under the charge of a courier, whom my father had sent to fetch me, to Brussels, where he was then living. Of how I left Ireland, and journeyed on afterwards, I know nothing; it was all confusion and turmoil. The frequent changes from place to place, the noise, the new people, the intense haste that seemed to pervade all that went on, addled me to that degree that I had few collected thoughts at the time, and no memory of them afterwards.

From certain droppings of the courier, however, and his heartily expressed joy as Brussels came in sight, I gathered that I had been a very troublesome charge, and refractory to the very limit of actual rebellion.

CHAPTER III.

WITH MY FATHER.

At the time I speak of, my father dwelt in a villa near Brussels, which had been built by or for Madame Malibran. It was a strange though somewhat incongruous edifice, and more resembled a public building than a private gentleman's residence. It stood in a vast garden, or rather park, where fruit and forest trees abounded, and patches of flowers came suddenly into view in most unexpected places. There were carriage drives, too, so ingeniously managed that the visitor could be led to believe the space ten times greater than it was in reality. The whole inside and out savored strongly of the theatre, and every device of good or bad taste — the latter largely predominating — had its inspiration in the stage.

As we drove under the arched entrance gate, over which a crowned leopard — the Norcott crest — was proudly rampant, I felt a strange throb at my heart that proved the old leaven was still alive within me, and that the feeling of being the son of a man of rank and fortune had a strong root in my heart.

From the deep reverence of the gorgeous porter, who wore an embroidered leather belt over his shoulder, to the trim propriety and order of the noiseless avenue, all bespoke an amount of state and grandeur that appealed very powerfully to me, and I can still recall how the bronze lamps that served to light the approach struck me as something wonderfully fine, as the morning's sun glanced on their crested tops.

The carriage drew up at the foot of a large flight of marble steps, which led to a terrace covered by a long veranda.

Under the shade of this two gentlemen sat at breakfast, both unknown to me. "Whom have we here?" cried the elder, a fat, middle-aged man of coarse features and stern expression, — "whom have we here?"

The younger — conspicuous by a dressing-gown and cap that glittered with gold embroidery — looked lazily over the top of his newspaper, and said, "That boy of Norcott's, I take it; he was to arrive to-day."

This was the first time I heard an expression that my ears were soon to be well familiar to, and I cannot tell how bitterly the words insulted me. "Who were they," I asked myself, "who, under my father's roof, could dare so to call me! and why was I not styled Sir Roger Norcott's son, and not thus disparagingly, 'that boy of Norcott's'?"

I walked slowly up the steps among these men as defiantly as though there was a declared enmity between us, and was proceeding straight towards the door, when the elder called out, "Holloa, youngster, come here and report yourself! You've just come, have n't you?"

"I have just come," said I, slowly; "but when I report myself it shall be to my father, Sir Roger Norcott."

"You got that, Hotham, and I must say you deserved it too," said the younger in a low tone, which my quick hearing, however, caught.

"Will you have some breakfast with us?" said the elder, with a faint laugh, as though he enjoyed the encounter.

"No, I thank you, sir," said I, stiffly, and passed on into the house.

"Master Digby," said a smart little man in black, who for a moment or two puzzled me whether he was a guest or a servant, "may I show you to your room, sir? Sir Roger is not up; he seldom rings for his bath before one o'clock; but he said he would have it earlier to-day."

"And what is your name, pray?"

"Nixon, sir. Mr. Nixon, Sir Roger is pleased to call me for distinction' sake; the lower servants require it."

"Tell me then, Mr. Nixon, who are the two gentlemen I saw at breakfast outside?"

"The stoutish gentleman, sir, is Captain Hotham, of the Royal Navy; the other, with the Turkish pipe, is Mr. Clere-

mont, Secretary to the Legation here. Great friends of Sir Roger's, sir. Dine here three or four times a week, and have their rooms always kept for them."

The appearance of my room, into which Nixon now ushered me, went far to restore me to a condition of satisfaction. It was the most perfect little bedroom it is possible to imagine, and Nixon never wearied in doing the honors of displaying it.

"Here's your library, sir. You've only to slide this mirror into the wall; and here are all your books. This press is your armory. Sir Roger gave the order himself for that breech-loader at Liège. This small closet has your bath,—always ready, as you see, sir,—hot and cold; and that knob yonder commands the shower-bath. It smells fresh of paint here just now, sir, for it was only finished on Saturday; and the men are coming to-day to fix a small iron staircase from your balcony down to the garden. Sir Roger said he was sure you would like it."

I was silent for a moment,—a moment of exquisite revery,—and then I asked if there were always people visitors at the Villa.

"I may say, sir, indeed, next to always. We have n't dined alone since March last."

"How many usually come to dinner?"

"Five or seven, sir; always an odd number. Seldom more than seven, and never above eleven, except a state dinner to some great swell going through."

"No ladies, of course?"

"Pardon me, sir. The Countess Vander Neeve dined here yesterday; Madam Van Straaten, and Mrs. Cleremont—Excuse me, sir, there's Sir Roger's bell. I must go and tell him you've arrived."

When Nixon left me, I sat for full twenty minutes, like one walking out of a trance, and asking myself how much was real, and how much fiction, of all around me?

My eyes wandered over the room, and from the beautiful little Gothic clock on the mantelpiece to the gilded pineapple from which my bed-curtains descended,—everything seemed of matchless beauty to me. Could I ever weary of admiring them? Would they seem to me every morning as I

awoke as tasteful and as elegant as now they appeared to me? Oh, if dear mamma could but see them! If she but knew with what honor I was received, would not the thought go far to assuage the grief our separation cost her? And, last of all, came the thought, if she herself were here to live with me, to read with me, to be my companion as she used to be, — could life offer anything to compare with such happiness? And why should not this be? If papa really should love me, why might I not lead him to see to whom I owed all that made me worthy of his love?

"Breakfast is served, sir, in the small breakfast-room," said a servant, respectfully.

"You must show me where that is," said I, rising to follow him.

And now we walked along a spacious corridor, and descended a splendid stair of white marble, with gilded banisters, and across an octagon hall, with a pyramid of flowering plants in the centre, and into a large gallery with armor on the walls, that I wished greatly to linger over and examine, and then into a billiard-room, and at last into the small breakfast-parlor, where a little table was laid out, and another servant stood in readiness to serve me.

"Mr. Eccles, sir, will be down in a moment, if you'll be pleased to wait for him," said the man.

"And who is Mr. Eccles?" asked I.

"The gentleman as is to be your tutor, sir, I believe," replied he, timidly; "and he said perhaps you'd make the tea, sir."

"All right," said I, opening the caddy, and proceeding to make myself at home at once. "What is here?"

"Devilled kidneys, sir; and this is fried mackerel. Mr. Eccles takes oysters; but he won't have them opened till he's down. Here he is, sir."

The door was now flung open, and a good-looking young man, with a glass stuck in one eye, entered, and with a cheery but somewhat affected voice, called out, —

"Glad to see you, Digby, my boy; hope I have not starved you out waiting for me?"

"I'm very hungry, sir, but not quite starved out," said I, half amazed at the style of man selected to be my guide,

and whose age at most could not be above three or four and twenty.

"You have n't seen your father yet, of course, nor won't these two hours. Yes, Gilbert, let us have the oysters. I always begin with oysters and a glass of sauterne; and, let me tell you, your father's sauterne is excellent. Not that I counsel *you*, however, to start with wine at breakfast. I have n't told you that I'm to be your tutor," said he, filling his glass; "and here's to our future fellowship."

I smiled and sipped my tea to acknowledge the toast, and he went on, —

"You must n't be afraid that I'll lean too heavily on you, Digby, — at least, at first. My system is, never make education a punishment. There's nothing that a gentleman — mind, I say a gentleman — ought to know that he cannot acquire as easily and as pleasantly as he does field-sports. If a man has to live by his wits, he must drudge; there's no help for it. And — But here come the oysters. Ain't they magnificent? Let me give you one piece of instruction while the occasion serves; let no one ever persuade you that Colchester oysters equal the Ostend. They have neither the plumpness nor the juiciness, and still less have they that fresh odor of the sea that gives such zest to appetite. One of these days I shall ask you what Horace says of oysters, and where. You never heard of Horace, eh?"

"Yes, sir; I was reading the 'Odes' when I came away."

"And with whom, pray?"

"With mamma, sir."

"And do you mean to say mamma knew Latin?"

"Yes, sir; she learned it to teach me. She worked far harder than I did, and I could never come up with her."

"Ah, yes, I see; but all that sort of learning — that irregular study — is a thing to be grubbed up. If I were to be frank with you, Digby, I'd say I'd rather have you in total ignorance than with that smattering of knowledge a mamma's teaching is sure to imply. What had you read before Horace?"

"'Cæsar's Commentaries,' sir, an 'Æneid' of Virgil, two plays of Terence —"

"Any Greek? — anything of Euripedes or Aristophanes, eh?" asked he, mockingly.

"No, sir; we were to begin the New Testament after the holidays; for I had just gone over the grammar twice."

With mamma, of course?"

"Yes, sir."

He helped himself to a cutlet, and as he poured the Harvey's sauce over it, it was plain to see that he was not thinking of what was before him, but employed in another and different direction. After a considerable pause he turned his eyes full upon me, and with a tone of far more serious import than he had yet used, said, "We're not very long acquainted, Digby; but I have a trick of reading people through their faces, and I feel I can trust you." He waited for some remark from me, but I made none, and he went on: "With an ordinary boy of your age, — indeed, I might go farther, and say with any other boy — I'd not venture on the confidence I am now about to make; but a certain instinct tells me I run no danger in trusting you."

"Is it a secret, sir?"

"Well, in one sense it *is* a secret; but why do you ask?"

"Because mamma told me to avoid secrets; to have none of my own, and know as little as I could of other people's."

"An excellent rule in general, but there are cases where it will not apply: this is one of them, for here the secret touches your own family. You are aware that papa and mamma do not live together? Don't flush up, Digby; I'm not going to say one word that could hurt you. It is for your benefit — I might say for your absolute safety — that I speak now. Your father has one of the noblest natures a man ever possessed; he is a prince in generosity, and the very soul of honor, and, except pride, I don't believe he has a fault. This same pride, however, leads him to fancy he can never do wrong; indeed, he does not admit that he ever made a mistake in his life, and, consequently, he does not readily forgive those to whom he imputes any disasters that befall him. Your mother's family are included in this condemned list, — I can't exactly say why; and for the same reason, or no reason, your mother herself. You must,

therefore, take especial care that you never speak of one of these people."

"And mamma?"

"*Her* name least of all. There may come a time — indeed, it is sure to come — when this difficulty can be got over; but any imprudence now — the smallest mistake — would destroy this chance. Of course it's very hard on you, my poor fellow, to be debarred from the very theme you'd like best to dwell on; but when you know the danger — not merely danger, but the positive certainty of mischief — a chance word might bring about, I read you very ill, or you'll profit by my warning."

I bent my head to mean assent, but I could not speak.

"Papa will question you whether you have been to school, and what books you are reading, and your answer will be, 'Never at school; had all my lessons at home.' Not a word more, mind that, Digby. Say it now after me, that I may see if you can be exact to a syllable."

I repeated the words correctly, and he patted me affectionately on the shoulder, and said, —

"You and I are sure to get on well together. When I meet with a boy, who, besides being intelligent, is a born gentleman, I never hesitate about treating him as my equal, save in that knowledge of life I'm quite ready to share with him. I don't want to be a Pope with my pupil, and say, 'You are not to do this, or think that,' and give no reason why. You'll always find me ready to discuss with you, and talk over anything that puzzles you. I was not treated in that fashion myself, and I know well what the repressive system has cost me. You follow me, don't you, in what I say?"

"Yes, sir; I think I understand it all."

Whether I looked as if my words had more meaning than they expressed, or that some sort of misgiving was working within him that he had been hasty in his confidence, I know not; but he arose suddenly, and said, "I must go and get a cigarette." And with that he left me.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VILLA MALIBRAN.

For some hours I wandered over the house, admiring the pictures and the bronzes and the statuettes, and the hundreds of odd knick-knacks of taste or curiosity that filled the *salons*. The treasures of art were all new to me, and I thought I could never weary of gazing on some grand landscape by Both, or one of those little interiors of Dutch life by Ostade or Mieris. It seemed to me the very summit of luxury, that all these glorious objects should be there, awaiting as it were the eye of him who owned them, patient slaves of his pleasure, to be rewarded by, perhaps, a hurried glance as he passed. The tempered light, the noiseless footsteps, as one trod the triple-piled carpet, the odor of rich flowers everywhere, imparted a dreaminess to the sense of enjoyment that, after long, long years, I can recall and almost revive by an effort of memory.

I met no one as I loitered through the rooms, for I was in a part of the house only opened on great occasions or for large receptions; and so I strayed on, lost in wonderment at the extent and splendor of a scene which, to my untutored senses, seemed of an actually royal magnificence. Having reached what I believed to be the limit of the suite of rooms, I was about to retrace my steps, when I saw that a small octagon tower opened from an angle of the room, though no apparent doorway led into it. This puzzle interested me at once, and I set about to resolve it, if I might. I opened one of the windows to inspect the tower on the outside, and saw that no stairs led up to it, nor any apparent communication existed with the rest of the house. I be-thought me of the sliding mirror which in my own room concealed the bookcase, and set to work to see if some

similar contrivance had not been employed here; but I searched in vain. Defeated and disappointed, I was turning away when, passing my hand along the margin of a massive picture-frame, I touched a small button; and as I did so, with a faint sound like a wail, the picture moved slowly, like an opening door, and disclosed the interior of the tower. I entered at once, my curiosity now raised to a point of intensity to know what had been so carefully and cunningly guarded from public view. What a blank disappointment was mine! The little room, about nine or ten feet in diameter, contained but a few straw-bottomed chairs, and a painted table on which a tea-service of common blue-ware stood. A Dutch clock was on a bracket at one side of the window, and a stuffed bird — a grouse, I believe — occupied another. A straight-backed old sofa, covered with a vulgar chintz, stood against the wall; an open book, with a broken fan in the leaves, to mark the place, lay on the sofa. The book was "Paul and Virginia. A common sheet almanac was nailed against the wall, but over the printed columns of the months a piece of white paper was pasted, on which, in large letters, was written "June 11, 18—. Dies infesta." I started. I had read that date once before in my mother's prayer-book, and had learned it was her marriage-day. As a ray of sunlight displays in an instant every object within its beam, I at once saw the meaning of every detail around me. These were the humble accessories of that modest home from which my dear mother was taken; these were the grim reminders of the time my father desired to perpetuate as an undying sorrow. I trembled to think what a nature I should soon be confronted with, and how terrible must be the temper of a man whose resentments asked for such aliment to maintain them! I stole away abashed at my own intrusiveness, and feeling that I was rightfully punished by the misery that overwhelmed me. How differently now did all the splendor appear to me as I retraced my steps! how defiantly I gazed on that magnificence which seemed to insult the poverty I had just quitted!

What a contrast to the nurtured spitefulness of his conduct was my poor mother's careful preservation of a picture representing my father in his uniform. A badly painted

thing it was; but with enough of likeness to recall him. And as such, in defiance of neglect and ill-usage and insult, she preserved it, — a memorial, not of happier days, but of a time when she dreamed of happiness to come. While I was thus thinking, seeking in my mind comparisons between them, which certainly redounded but little to his credit, Nixon came up to me, saying, "Oh, Master Digby, we've been looking for you in every direction. Sir Roger has asked over and over why you have not been to see him; and I'm afraid you'll find him displeased at your delay."

"I'm ready now," said I, drily, and followed him.

My father was in his study, lying on a sofa, and cutting the leaves of a new book as I entered; and he did not interrupt the operation to offer me his hand.

"So, sir," said he, calmly and coldly, "you have taken your time to present yourself to me? Apparently you preferred making acquaintance with the house and the grounds."

"I am very sorry, sir," I began; "but I did not know you had risen. Nixon told me about one or two —"

"Indeed! I was not aware that you and Mr. Nixon had been discussing my habits. Come nearer; nearer still. What sort of dress is this? Is it a smock-frock you have on?"

"No, sir. It's a blouse to keep my jacket clean. I have got but one."

"And these shoes; are they of your own making?"

"No, sir. I could n't make even as good as these."

"You are a very poor-looking object, I must say. What was Antoine about that he did n't, at least, make you look like a gentleman, eh? Can you answer me that?"

"No, sir, I cannot."

"Nor I, either," said he, sighing. "Have you been equally neglected inside as out? Have you learned to read?"

"Yes, sir."

"And to write?"

"Yes, sir."

"Write my name, then, there, on that piece of paper, and let me see it."

I drew nigh, and wrote in a full, bold hand, Roger Norcott.

"Why not Sir Roger Norcott, boy? Why not give me my name and title too?"

"You said your name, sir, and I thought —"

"No matter what you thought. This literalism comes of home breeding," muttered he to himself; "they are made truthful at the price of being vulgar. What do you know besides reading and writing?"

"A little Latin, sir, and some French, and some German, and three books of Euclid, and the Greek grammar —"

"There, there, that's more than enough. It will tax your tutor's ingenuity to stub up all this rubbish, and prepare the soil for real acquirement. I was hoping I should see you a savage: a fresh, strong-natured impulsive savage! What I'm to do with you, with your little peddling knowledge of a score of things, I can't imagine. I'd swear you can neither ride, row, nor fence, never handled a cricket-ball or a single-stick?"

"Quite true, sir; but I'd like to do every one of them."

"Of course you have been taught music?"

"Yes, sir; the piano, and a little singing."

"That completes it," cried he, flinging his book from him.

"They've been preparing you for a travelling circus, while I wanted to make you a gentleman. Mind me now, sir, and don't expect that I ever repeat my orders to any one. What I say once I mean to be observed. Let your past life be entirely forgotten by you, — a thing that had no reality; begin from this day — from this very room — a new existence, which is to have neither link nor tie to what has gone before it. The persons you will see here, their ways, their manners, their tone, will be examples for your imitation; copy them, not servilely nor indiscriminately, but as you will find how their traits will blend with your own nature. Never tell an untruth, never accept an insult without redress, be slow about forming friendships, and where you hate, hate thoroughly. That's enough for the present. Ask Mr. Eccles to have the kindness to take you to his tailor and order some clothes. You must dine alone till you are suitably dressed. After that you shall come to my table. One

thing more and you may go: don't ever approach me with tales or complaints of any one; right yourself where you can, and where you cannot, bear your grievance silently. You can change nothing, alter nothing, here; you are a guest, but a guest over whom I exercise full control. If you please me, it will be well for you; if not, you understand — it will cost me little to tell you so. Go. Go now." He motioned me to leave him, and I went. Straight to my room I went, and sat down at once to write it all to mother. My heart swelled with indignation at the way I had been received, and a hundred times over did I say to myself that there was no poverty, no hardship I would not face rather than buy a life of splendor on such ignominious terms. Oh, if I could but get back again to the little home I had quitted, how I would bless the hour that restored me to peace of mind and self-respect! As I wrote, my indignation warmed with every line. I found that my passion was actually mastering my reason. Better to finish this, later on, — when I shall be cooler, thought I; and I walked to my window and opened it. There were voices of people speaking in the paddock below, and I leaned over the balcony and saw the two men I had seen at breakfast, seated on rustic chairs, watching a young horse being broken to the saddle. The well-worn ring in the grass showed that this spot was reserved for such purposes, nor was I displeased to know that such a source of interest lay so near to me.

"Is n't he one of your Mexicans, George?" asked Captain Hotham.

"No, sir, he's a Hungarian-bred 'un. Master calls him a Jucker, whatever that is."

"Plenty of action, anyhow."

"A little too much, sir; that's his fault. He's a-comin' now, and it's all they can do to keep him going over the park paling. Take this one back," said he to the groom, who was ringing a heavy-shouldered, ungainly colt in the ring.

"You'll not gain much credit by that animal, George," said Cleremont, as he lighted a cigar.

"He ain't a beauty, sir; he's low before, and he's cow-hocked behind; but Sir Roger says he's the best blood in

Norfolk. Take care, take care, sir! the skittish devil never knows where he'll send his hind-legs. Steady, Tom, don't check him: why, he's sweating as if he had been round the two-mile course."

The animal that called for this criticism was a dark chestnut, but so bathed in sweat as to appear almost black. He was one of those cross breeds between the Arab and the western blood, that gain all the beauty of head and crest and straightly formed croup, and yet have length of body and depth of rib denied to the pure Arab. To my thinking he was the most perfect creature I had ever seen, and as he bounded and plunged, there was a supple grace and pliancy about him indescribably beautiful.

George now unloosened the long reins which were attached to the heavy surcingle, and after walking the animal two or three times round the circle, suffered him to go free. As if astonished at his liberty, the young creature stood still for a minute or two, and sniffed the air, and then gave one wild bound and headlong plunge, as though he were going straight into the earth; after which he looked timidly about him, and then walked slowly along in the track worn by the others.

"He's far quieter than the last time I saw him," said Hotham.

"He's gettin' more sense every day, sir," replied George; "he don't scratch his head with his hind-leg now, sir, and he don't throw hisself down neither."

"He has n't given up biting, I see," said Cleremont.

"No, sir; and they tell me them breed never does; but it's only play, sir."

"I'll give you six months before you can call him fit to ride, George."

"My name ain't Spinner, sir, if the young gent as come yesterday don't back him in six weeks' time."

"And is it for the boy Norcott intends him?" asked Cleremont of Hotham.

"So he told me yesterday; and though I warned him that he had n't another boy if that fellow should come to grief, he only said, 'If he's got *my* blood in him, he'll keep his saddle; and if he has n't, he had better make room for another.'"

"Ain't he a-going beautiful now?" cried George, as the animal swung slowly along at a gentle trot, every step of which was as measured as clockwork.

"You'll have to teach the youngster also, George," said Hotham. "I'm sure he never backed a horse in his life."

"Nay, sir, he rode very pretty indeed when he was six years old. I did n't put him on a Shelty, or one of the hard-mouthed 'uns, but a nice little lively French mare, that reared up the moment he bore hard on her bit; so that he learned to sit on his beast without holdin' on by the bridle."

"He's a loutish boy," said Cleremont to the Captain. "I'll wager what you like they'll not make a horseman of him."

"Eccles says he's a confounded pedant," said the other; "that he wanted to cap Horace with him at breakfast."

"Poor Bob! that was n't exactly his line; but he'd hold his own in Balzac or Fred Soulié."

"Oh, now I see what Norcott was driving at when he said, 'I wanted the stuff to make a gentleman, and they've sent me the germ of a school-usher.' I said, 'Send him to sea with me. I shall be afloat in March, and I'll take him.'"

"Well, what answer did he make you?"

"It was n't a civil one," said the other, gruffly. "He said, 'You misapprehend me, Hotham. A sea-captain is only a boatswain in epaulettes. I mean the boy to be a gentleman.'"

"And you bore that?"

"Yes. Just as well as you bore his telling you at dinner on Sunday last that a Legation secretary was a cross between an old lady and a clerk in the Customs."

"A man who scatters impertinences broadcast is only known for the merits of his cook or his cellar."

"Both of which are excellent."

"Shall I send him in, sir?" asked George, as he patted the young horse and caressed him.

"Well, Eccles," cried Hotham, as the tutor lounged lazily up, "what do you say to the mount they're going to put your pupil on?"

"I wish they'd wait a bit. I shall not be ready for orders till next spring, and I'd rather they'd not break his neck before February or March."

"Has Norcott promised you the presentation, Bob?"

"No. He can't make up his mind whether he'll give it to me or to a Plymouth Brother, or to that fellow that was taken up at Salford for blasphemy, and who happens to be in full orders."

"With all his enmity to the Established Church, I think he might be satisfied with you," said Cleremont.

"Very neat, and very polite too," said Eccles; "but that this is the Palace of Truth, I might feel nettled."

"Is it, by Jove?" cried Hotham. "Then it must be in the summer months, when the house is shut up. Who has got a strong cigar? These Cubans of Norcott's have no flavor. It must be close on luncheon-time."

"I can't join you, for I've to go into town, and get my young bear trimmed, and his nails cut. 'Make him presentable,' Norcott said, and I've had easier tasks to do."

So saying, Eccles moved off in one direction, while Hotham and Cleremont strolled away in another; and I was left to my own reflections, which were not few.

CHAPTER V.

A FIRST DINNER-PARTY.

I WAS made "presentable" in due time, and on the fifth day after my arrival made my appearance at the dinner-table. "Sit there, sir," said my father, "opposite me." And I was not sorry to perceive that an enormous vase with flowers effectually screened me from his sight. The post of honor thus accorded me was a sufficient intimation to my father's guests how he intended me to be treated by them; and as they were without an exception all hangers-on and dependants, — men who dined badly or not at all when uninvited to his table, — they were marvellously quick in understanding that I was to be accepted as his heir, and, after himself, the person of most consideration there.

Besides the three individuals I have already mentioned, our party included two foreigners, — Baron Steinmetz, an aide-de-camp of the King, and an Italian duke, San Giovanni. The Duke sat on my father's right, the Baron on mine. The conversation during dinner was in French, which I followed imperfectly, and was considerably relieved on discovering that the German spoke French with difficulty, and blundered over his genders as hopelessly as I should have done had I attempted to talk. "Ach Gott," muttered he to himself in German, "when people were seeking for a common language, why did n't they take one that all humanity could pronounce?"

"So meine ich auch, Herr Baron," cried I; "I quite agree with you."

He turned towards me with a look of positive affection, on seeing I knew German, and we both began to talk together at once with freedom.

"What's the boy saying?" cried my father, as he caught the sounds of some glib speech of mine. "Don't let him bore you with his bad French, Steinmetz."

"He is charming me with his admirable German," said the Baron. "I can't tell when I have met a more agreeable companion."

This was, of course, a double flattery, for my German was very bad, and my knowledge on any subject no better; but the fact did not diminish the delight the praise afforded me.

"Do you know German, Digby?" asked my father.

"A little, — a very little, sir."

"The fellow would say he knew Sanscrit if you asked him," whispered Hotham to Eccles; but my sharp ears overheard him.

"Come, that's better than I looked for," said my father.

"What do you say, Eccles? Is there stuff there?"

"Plenty, Sir Roger; enough and to spare. I count on Digby to do me great credit yet."

"What career do you mean your son to follow?" asked the Italian, while he nodded to me over his wine-glass in most civil recognition.

"I'll not make a sailor of him, like that sea-wolf yonder; nor a diplomatist, like my silent friend in the corner. Neither shall he be a soldier till British armies begin to do something better than hunt out illicit stills and protect process-servers."

"A politician, perhaps?"

"Certainly not, sir. There's no credit in belonging to a Parliament brought down to the meridian of soap-boilers and bankrupt bill-brokers."

"There's the Church, Sir Roger," chimed in Eccles.

"There's the Pope's Church, with some good prizes in the wheel; but your branch, Master Bob, is a small concern, and it is trembling, besides. No. I'll make him none of these. It is in our vulgar passion for money-getting we throw our boys into this or that career in life, and we narrow to the stupid formula of some profession abilities that were meant for mankind. I mean Digby to deal with the world; and to fit him for the task, he shall learn as much of human nature as I can afford to teach him."

"Ah, there's great truth in that, very great truth; very wise and very original too," were the comments that ran round the board.

Excited by this theme, and elated by his success, my father went on:—

"If you want a boy to ride, you don't limit him to the quiet hackney that neither pulls nor shies, neither bolts nor plunges; and so, if you wish your son to know his fellow-men, you don't keep him in a charmed circle of deans and archdeacons, but you throw him fearlessly into contact with old debauchees like Hotham, or abandoned scamps of the style of Cleremont," — and here he had to wait till the laughter subsided to add, "and, last of all, you take care to provide him with a finishing tutor like Eccles."

"I knew your turn was coming, Bob," whispered Hotham; but still all laughed heartily, well satisfied to stand ridicule themselves if others were only pilloried with them.

When dinner was over, we sat about a quarter of an hour, not more, and then adjourned to coffee in a small room that seemed half boudoir, half conservatory. As I loitered about, having no one to speak to, I found myself at last in a little shrubbery, through which a sort of labyrinth meandered. It was a taste of the day revived from olden times, and amazed me much by its novelty. While I was puzzling myself to find out the path that led out of the entanglement, I heard a voice I knew at once to be Hotham's, saying, —

"Look at that boy of Norcott's: he's not satisfied with the imbroglia within doors, but he must go out to mystify himself with another."

"I don't much fancy that young gentleman," said Cleremont.

"And I only half. Bob Eccles says we have all made a precious mistake in advising Norcott to bring him back."

"Yet it was our only chance to prevent it. Had we opposed the plan, he was sure to have determined on it. There's nothing for it but your notion, Hotham; let him send the brat to sea with you."

"Yes, I think that would do it." And now they had walked out of earshot, and I heard no more.

If I was not much reassured by these droppings, I was far more moved by the way in which I came to hear them. Over and over had my dear mother cautioned me against listening to what was not meant for me; and here, simply because I found myself the topic, I could not resist the temptation to learn how men would speak of me. I remembered well the illustration by which my mother warned me as to the utter uselessness of the sort of knowledge thus gained. She told me of a theft some visitor had made at Abbotsford, — the object stolen being a signet-ring Lord Byron had given to Sir Walter. The man who stole this could never display the treasure without avowing himself a thief. He had, therefore, taken what from the very moment of the fraud became valueless. He might gaze on it in secret with such pleasure as his self-accusings would permit. He might hug himself with the thought of possession; but how could that give pleasure, or how drown the everlasting shame the mere sight of the object must revive? So would it be, my mother said, with him who unlawfully possessed himself of certain intelligence which he could not employ without being convicted of the way he gained it. The lesson thus illustrated had not ceased to be remembered by me; and though I tried all my casuistry to prove that I listened without intention, almost without being aware of it, I was shocked and grieved to find how soon I was forgetting the precepts she had labored so hard to impress upon me.

She had also said, "By the same rule which would compel you to restore to its owner what you had become possessed of wrongfully, you are bound to let him you have accidentally overheard know to what extent you are aware of his thoughts."

"This much, at least, I can do," said I: "I can tell these gentlemen that I heard a part of their conversation."

I walked about for nigh an hour revolving these things in my head, and at last returned to the house. As I entered the drawing-room, I was struck by the silence. My father, Cleremont, and the two foreigners were playing whist at one end of the room, Hotham and Eccles were seated at chess at another. Not a word was uttered save some brief demand of the game, or a murmured "check," by the chess-

players. Taking my place noiselessly beside these latter, I watched the board eagerly, to try and acquire the moves.

"Do you understand the game?" whispered Hotham.

"No, sir," said I, in the same cautious tone.

"I'll show you the moves, when this party is over." And I muttered my thanks for the courtesy.

"This is intolerable!" cried out my father. "That confounded whispering is far more distracting than any noise. I have lost all count of my game. I say, Eccles, why is not that boy in bed?"

"I thought you said he might sup, Sir Roger."

"If I did, it was because I thought he knew how to conduct himself. Take him away at once."

And Eccles rose, and with more kindness than I had expected from him, said, "Come, Digby, I'll go too, for we have both to be early risers to-morrow."

Thus ended my first day in public; and I have no need to say what a strange conflict filled my head that night as I dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE DAYS WENT OVER.

IF I give one day of my life, I give, with very nearly exactness, the unbroken course of my existence. I rose very early — hours ere the rest of the household was stirring — to work at my lessons, which Mr. Eccles apportioned for me with a liberality that showed he had the highest opinion of my abilities, or — as I discovered later on to be the truth — a profound indifference about them. Thus, a hundred lines of Virgil, thirty of Xenophon, three propositions of Euclid, with a sufficient amount of history, geography, and logic, would be an ordinary day's work. It is fair I should own that when the time of examination came, I found him usually imbibing seltzer and curaçoa, with a wet towel round his head; or, in his robust moments, practising the dumbbells to develop his muscles. So that the interrogatories were generally in this wise:—

"How goes it, Digby? What of the Homer, eh?"

"It's Xenophon, sir."

"To be sure it is. I was forgetting, as a man might who had my headache. And, by the way, Digby, why will your father give Burgundy at supper instead of Bordeaux? Some one must surely have told him accidentally it was a deadly poison, for he adheres to it with desperate fidelity."

"I believe I know my Greek, sir," would I say, modestly, to recall him to the theme.

"Of course you do; you'd cut a sorry figure here this morning if you did not know it. No, sir; I'm not the man to enjoy your father's confidence, and take his money, and betray my trust. His words to me were, 'Make him a gentleman, Eccles. I could find scores of fellows to cram him with Greek particles and double equations, but I want

the man who can turn out the perfect article, — the gentleman.' Come now, what relations subsisted between Cyrus and Xenophon?"

"Xenophon coached him, sir."

"So he did. Just strike a light for me. My head is splitting for want of a cigar. You may have a cigarette too. I don't object. Virgil we'll keep till to-morrow. Virgil was a muff, after all. Virgil was a decentish sort of Martin Tupper, Digby. He had no wit, no repartee, no smartness; he prosed about ploughs and shepherds, like a maudlin old squire; or he told a very shady sort of anecdote about Dido, which I always doubted should be put into the hands of youth. Horace is free, too, a thought too free; but he could n't help it. Horace lived the same kind of life we do here, a species of roast-partridge and pretty woman sort of life; but then he was the gentleman always. If old Flaccus had lived now, he'd have been pretty much like Bob Eccles, and putting in his divinity lectures perhaps. By the way, I hope your father won't go and give away that small rectory in Kent. 'We who live to preach, must preach to live.' That is n't exactly the line, but it will do. Pulvis et umbra sumus, Digby; and take what care we may of ourselves, we must go back, as the judges say, to the place from whence we came. There, now, you've had classical criticism, sound morality, worldly wisdom, and the rest of it; and, with your permission, we'll pack up the books, and stand prorogued till — let me see — Saturday next."

Of course I moved no amendment, and went my way rejoicing.

From that hour I was free to follow my own inclinations, which usually took a horsey turn; and as the stable offered several mounts, I very often rode six hours a day. Hotham was always to be found in the pistol-gallery about four of an afternoon, and I usually joined him there, and speedily became more than his match.

"Well, youngster," he would say, when beaten and irritable, "I can beat your head off at billiards, anyhow."

But I was not long in robbing him of even this boast, and in less than three months I could defy the best player in the house. The fact was, I had in a remarkable degree that

small talent for games of every kind which is a speciality with certain persons. I could not only learn a game quickly, but almost always attain considerable skill in it.

"So, sir," said my father to me one day at dinner, — and nothing was more rare than for him to address a word to me, and I was startled as he did so, — "so, sir, you are going to turn out an Admirable Crichton on my hands, it seems. I hear of nothing but your billiard-playing, your horsemanship, and your cricketing, while Mr. Eccles tells me that your progress with him is equally remarkable."

He stopped and seemed to expect me to make some rejoinder; but I could not utter a word, and felt overwhelmed at the observation and notice his speech had drawn upon me.

"It's better I should tell you at once," resumed my father, "that I dislike prodigies. I dislike because I distrust them. The fellow who knows at fourteen what he might reasonably have known at thirty is not unlikely to stop short at fifteen and grow no more. I don't wish to be personal, but I have heard it said Cleremont was a very clever boy."

The impertinence of this speech, and the laughter it at once excited, served to turn attention away from me; but, through the buzz and murmur around, I overheard Cleremont say to Hotham, "I shall pull him up short one of these days, and you'll see an end of all this."

"Now," continued my father, "if Eccles had told me that the boy was a skilful hand at sherry-cobbler, or a rare judge of a Cuban cigar, I'd have reposed more faith in the assurance than when he spoke of his classics."

"He ain't bad at a gin-sling with bitters, that I must say," said Eccles, whose self-control or good-humor, or mayhap some less worthy trait, always carried him successfully over a difficulty.

"So, sir," said my father, turning again on me, "the range of your accomplishments is complete. You might be a tapster or a jockey. When the nobility of France came to ruin in the Revolution, the best blood of the kingdom became barbers and dancing-masters: so that when some fine morning that gay gentleman yonder will discover that he is a beggar, he'll have no difficulty in finding a calling

to suit his tastes, and square with his abilities. What's Hotham grumbling about? Will any one interpret him for me?"

"Hotham is saying that this claret is corked," said the sea-captain, with a hoarse loud voice.

"Bottled at home!" said my father, "and, like your own education, Hotham, spoiled for a beggarly economy."

"I'm glad you've got it," muttered Cleremont, whose eyes glistened with malignant spite. "I have had enough of this; I'm for coffee," and he arose as he spoke.

"Has Cleremont left us?" asked my father.

"Yes; that last bottle has finished him. I told you before, Nixon knows nothing about wine. I saw that hog-head lying bung up for eight weeks before it was drawn off for bottling."

"Why did n't you speak to him about it, then?"

"And be told that I'm not his master, eh? You don't seem to know, Norcott, that you've got a houseful of the most insolent servants in Christendom. Cleremont's wife wanted the chestnuts yesterday in the phaeton, and George refused her: she might take the cobs, or nothing."

"Quite true," chimed in Eccles; "and the fellow said, 'I'm a-taking the young horses out in the break, and if the missis wants to see the chestnuts, she'd better come with me.'"

"And as to a late breakfast now, it's quite impossible; they delay and delay till they run you into luncheon," growled Hotham.

"They serve me my chocolate pretty regularly," said my father, negligently, and he arose and strolled out of the room. As he went, he slipped his arm within mine, and said, in a half-whisper, "I suppose it will come to this, — I shall have to change my friends or my household. Which would you advise?"

"I'd say the friends, sir."

"So should I, but that they would not easily find another place. There, go and see is the billiard-room lighted. I want to see you play a game with Cleremont."

Cleremont was evidently sulking under the sarcasm passed on him, and took up his cue to play with a bad grace.

"Who will have five francs on the party?" said my father. "I'm going to back the boy."

"Make it pounds, Norcott," said Hotham.

"I'll give you six to five, in tens," said Cleremont to my father. "Will you take it?"

I was growing white and red by turns all this time. I was terrified at the thought that money was to be staked on my play, and frightened by the mere presence of my father at the table.

"The youngster is too nervous to play. Don't let him, Norcott," said Hotham, with a kindness I had not given him credit for.

"Give me the cue, Digby; I'll take your place," said my father; and Cleremont and Hotham both drew nigh, and talked to him in a low tone.

"Eight and the stroke then be it," said my father, "and the bet in fifties." The others nodded, and Cleremont began the game.

I could not have believed I could have suffered the amount of intense anxiety that game cost me. Had my life been on the issue, I do not think I could have gone through greater alternations of hope and fear than now succeeded in my heart. Cleremont started with eight points odds, and made thirty-two off the balls before my father began to play. He now took his place, and by the first stroke displayed a perfect mastery of the game. There was a sort of languid grace, an indolent elegance about all he did, that when the stroke required vigor or power made me tremble for the result; but somehow he imparted the exact amount of force needed, and the balls moved about here and there as though obedient to some subtle instinct of which the cue gave a mere sign. He scored forty-two points in a few minutes, and then drawing himself up, said, "There's an eight-stroke now on the table. I'll give any one three hundred Naps to two that I do it."

None spoke. "Or I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take fifty from each of you and draw the game!" Another as complete silence ensued. "Or here's a third proposition, Give me fifty between you, and I'll hand over the cue to the boy; he shall finish the game."

"Oh, no, sir! I beg you — I entreat — " I began; but already, "Done," had been loudly uttered by both together, and the bet was ratified.

"Don't be nervous, boy," said my father, handing me his cue. "You see what's on the balls. You cannon and hold the white, and land the red in the middle pocket. If you can't do the brilliant thing, and finish the game with an eight stroke, do the safe one, — the cannon or the hazard. But, above all, don't lose your stroke, sir. Mind that, for I've a pot of money on the game."

"I don't think you ought to counsel him, Norcott," said Cleremont. "If he's a player, he's fit to devise his own game."

"Oh, hang it, no," broke in Hotham; "Norcott has a perfect right to tell him what's on the table."

"If you object seriously, sir," said my father proudly, "the party is at an end."

"I put it to yourself," began Cleremont.

"You shall not appeal to me against myself, sir. You either withdraw your objection, or you maintain it."

"Of course he withdraws it," said Hotham, whose eyes never wandered from my father's face.

Cleremont nodded a half-unwilling assent.

"You will do me the courtesy to speak, perhaps," said my father; and every word came from him with a tremulous roll.

"Yes, yes, I agree. There was really nothing in my remark," said Cleremont, whose self-control seemed taxed to its last limit.

"There, go on, boy, and finish this stupid affair," said my father, and he turned to the chimney to light his cigar.

I leaned over the table, and a mist seemed to rise before me. I saw volumes of cloud rolling swiftly across, and meteors, or billiard-balls, I knew not which, shooting through them. I played and missed; I did not even strike a ball. A wild roar of laughter, a cry of joy, and a confused blending of several voices in various tones followed, and I stood there like one stunned into immobility. Meanwhile Clere-

mont finished the game, and, clapping me gayly on the shoulder, cried, "I'm more grateful to you than your father is, my lad. That shaking hands of yours has made a difference of two hundred Naps to me." I turned towards the fire; my father had left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

A PRIVATE AUDIENCE.

I HAD but reached my room when Eccles followed me to say my father wished to see me at once.

"Come, come, Digby," said Eccles, good-naturedly, "don't be frightened. Even if he should be angry with you, his passion passes soon over; and, if uncontradicted, he is never disposed to bear a grudge long. Go immediately, however, and don't keep him waiting."

I cannot tell with what a sense of abasement I entered my father's dressing-room; for, after all, it was the abject condition of my own mind that weighed me down.

"So, sir," said he, as I closed the door, "this is something I was not prepared for. You might be forty things, but I certainly did not suspect that a son of mine should be a coward."

Had my father ransacked his whole vocabulary for a term of insult, he could not have found one to pain me like this.

"I am not a coward, sir," said I, reddening till I felt my face in a perfect glow.

"What!" cried he, passionately; "are you going to give me a proof of courage by daring to outrage *me*? Is it by sending back my words in my teeth you assume to be brave?"

"I ask pardon, sir," said I, humbly, "if I have replied rudely; but you called me by a name that made me forget myself. I hope you will forgive me."

"Sit down, there, sir; no, there." And he pointed to a more distant chair. "There are various sorts and shades of cowardice, and I would not have you tarnished with any one of them. The creature whose first thought, and indeed only one, in an emergency is his personal safety, and who,

till that condition is secured, abstains from all action, is below contempt; him I will not even consider. But next to him — of course with a long interval — comes the fellow who is so afraid of a responsibility that the very thought of it unmans him. How did the fact of my wager come to influence you at all, sir? Why should you have had any thought but for the game you were playing, and how it behoved you to play it? How came I and these gentlemen to stand between you and your real object, if it were not that a craven dread of consequences had got the ascendancy in your mind? If men were to be beset by these calculations, if every fellow carried about him an armor of sophistry like this, he'd have no hand free to wield a weapon, and the world would see neither men who storm a breach nor board an enemy. Till a man can so isolate and concentrate his faculties on what he has to do that all extraneous conditions cease to affect him, he will never be well served by his own powers; and he who is but half served is only half brave. There are times when the unreasoners are worth all the men of logic, remember that. And now go and sleep over it."

He motioned me to withdraw, but I could not bear to go till he had withdrawn the slur he had cast on me in the word coward. He looked at me steadfastly, but not harshly, for a moment or two, and then said, —

"You are not to think that it is out of regret for a lost sum of money I have read you this lecture. As to the wager itself, I am as well pleased that it ended as it did. These gentlemen are not rich, either of them. I can afford the loss. What I cannot afford is the way I lost it."

"But will you not say, sir, that I am no coward?" said I, faltering.

"I will withdraw the word," said he, slowly, "the very first time I shall see you deal with a difficulty without a thought for what it may cost you. There; good-night; leave me now. I mean to have a ride with you in the morning."

And he nodded twice, and smiled, and dismissed me.

There was nothing, certainly, very flattering to me in this reception. It cost me dearly while it lasted, and yet — I

cannot explain why — I came away with a feeling of affection for my father, and a desire to stand well in his esteem, such as I had not experienced till that moment. It was his utter indifference up to this that had chilled and repelled me. Any show of interest, anything that might evidence that he cared what I was or what I might become, was so much better than this apathy that I welcomed the change with delight. Accustomed to the tender solicitude of a loving mother, no niggard of her praise, and more given to sympathize than blame, the stern reserve of my father's manner had been a terrible reverse, and over and over had I asked myself why he took me from where I was loved and cherished, to live this life of ceremonious observance and cold deference.

To know that he felt even such interest in me as this, was to restore me to self-esteem at once. He would not have his son a coward, he said; and as I felt in my heart that I was not a coward, as I knew I was ready then and there to confront any peril he could propose to me, all that the speech left in my memory was a sense of self-satisfaction.

In each of the letters I had received from my mother she impressed on me how important it was that I should win my father's affection, and now a hope flashed across me that I might do this. I sat down to tell her all that had passed between us; but somehow, in recounting the incident of the billiard-room, I wandered away into a description of the house, its splendors and luxury, and of the life of costly pleasure that we were living. "You will ask, dearest mamma," I wrote, "how and when I find time to study amidst all these dissipations? and I grieve to own that I do very little. Mr. Eccles says he is satisfied with me; but I fear it is more because I obtrude little on his notice than that I am making any progress. We are still in the same scene of the Adrian that I began with you; and as to the Greek, we leave it over for Saturdays, and the Saturdays get skipped. I have become a good shot with the rifle; and George says I have the finest, lightest hand he knows on a horse, and that he'll make me yet a regular steeple-chase horseman. I have a passion for riding, and sometimes get four mounts on a day. Indeed, papa

takes no interest in the stable, and I give all the orders, and can have a team harnessed for me—which I do—when I am tired with the saddle. They have not quite given up calling me ‘that boy of Norcott’s;’ only now, when they do so, it is to say how well he rides, and what a taste he shows for driving and shooting.

“Don’t be afraid that I am neglecting my music. I play every day, and take singing lessons with an Italian: they call him the Count Guastalla; but I believe he is the tenor of the opera here, and only teaches me out of compliment to papa. He dines here nearly every day, and plays piquet with papa all the evening.

“There is a very beautiful lady comes here, — Madame Cleremont. She is the wife of the Secretary to the Legation. She is French, and has such pleasing ways, and is so gay, and so good-natured, and so fond of gratifying me in every way, that I delight in being with her; and we ride out together constantly, and I am now teaching her to drive the ponies, and she enjoys it just as I used myself. I don’t think papa likes her, for he seldom speaks to her, and never takes her in to dinner if there is another lady in the room; and I suspect she feels this, for she is often very sad. I dislike Mr. Cleremont; he is always saying snappish things, and is never happy, no matter how merry we are. But papa seems to like him best of all the people here. Old Captain Hotham and I are great friends, though he’s always saying, ‘You ought to be at sea, youngster. This sort of life will only make a blackleg of you.’ But I can’t make out why, because I am very happy and have so much to interest and amuse me, I must become a scamp. Mdme. Cleremont says, too, it is not true; that papa is bringing me up exactly as he ought, that I will enter life as a gentleman, and not be passing the best years of my existence in learning the habits of the well-bred world. They fight bitterly over this every day; but she always gets the victory, and then kisses me, and says, ‘Mon cher petit Digby, I’ll not have you spoiled, to please any vulgar prejudice of a tiresome old sea-captain.’ This she whispers, for she would not offend him for anything. Dear mamma, how you would love her if you knew her! I believe I’m to go to Rugby to school; but I hope

not, for how I shall live like a schoolboy after all this happiness I don't know; and M^dme. Cleremont says she will never permit it; but she has no influence over papa, and how could she prevent it? Captain Hotham is always saying, 'If Norcott does not send that boy to Harrow or Rugby, or some of these places, he'll graduate in the Marshalsea — that's a prison — before he's twenty.' I am so glad when a day passes without my being brought up for the subject of a discussion, which papa always ends with, 'After all I was neither an Etonian nor Rugbeian, and I suspect I can hold my own with most men; and if that boy does n't belie his breeding, perhaps he may do so too.'

"Nobody likes contradicting papa, especially when he says anything in a certain tone of voice, and whenever he uses this, the conversation turns away to something else.

"I forgot to say in my last, that your letters always come regularly. They arrive with papa's, and he sends them up to me at once, by his valet, Mons. Durand, who is always so nicely dressed, and has a handsomer watch-chain than papa.

"M^dme. Cleremont said yesterday, 'I'm so sorry not to know your dear mamma, Digby: but if I dared, I'd send her so many caresses, *de ma part*.' I said nothing at the time, but I send them now, and am your loving son,

"DIGBY NORCOTT."

This letter was much longer than it appears here. It filled several sides of note-paper, and occupied me till day-break. Indeed, I heard the bell ringing for the workmen as I closed it, and shortly after a gentle tap came to my door, and George Spinner, our head groom, entered.

"I saw you at the window, Master Digby," said he, "and I thought I'd step up and tell you not to ride in spurs this morning. Sir Roger wants to see you on May Blossom, and you know she's a hot 'un, sir, and don't want the steel. Indeed, if she feels the boot, she's as much as a man can do to sit."

"You're a good fellow, George, to think of this," said I. "Do you know where we're going?"

"That's what I was going to tell you, sir. We are going to the Bois de Cambre, and there's two of our men gone on with hurdles, to set them up in the cross alleys of the wood, and we're to come on 'em unawares, you see."

"Then why don't you give me Father Tom or Hungerford?"

"The master would n't have either. He said, 'A child of five years old could ride the Irish horse;' and as for Hungerford, he calls him a circus horse."

"But who knows if Blossom will take a fence?"

"I'll warrant she'll go high enough; how she'll come down, and where, is another matter. Only don't you go a-pullin' at her, ride her in the snaffle, and as light as you can. Face her straight at what she's got to go over, and let her choose her own pace."

"I declare I don't see how this is a fair trial of my riding, George. Do you?"

"Well, it is, and it is n't," said he, scratching his head.

"You might have a very tidy hand and a nice seat, and not be able to ride the mare; but then, sir, you see, if you have the judgment to manage her coolly, and not rouse her temper too far, if you can bring her to a fence, and make her take off at a proper distance, and fly it, never changing her stride nor balk, why then he'll see you can ride."

"And if she rushes, or comes with her chest to a bank, or if—as I think she will—she refuses her fence, rears, and falls back, what then?"

"Then I think the mornin's sport will be pretty nigh over," growled he; as though I had suggested something personally offensive to him.

"What time do we go, George?"

"Sir Roger said seven, sir, but that will be eight or half-past. He's to drive over to the wood, and the horses are to meet him there."

"All right. I'll take a short sleep and be sharp to time."

As he left the room, I tore open my letter, to add a few words. I thought I'd say something that, if mischance befell me, might be a comfort to my dear mother to read over and dwell on, but for the life of me I did not know

how to do it, without exciting alarm or awakening her to the dread of some impending calamity. Were I to say, I'm off for a ride with papa, it meant nothing; and if I said, I'm going to show him how I can manage a very hot horse, it might keep her in an agony of suspense till I wrote again.

So I merely added, "I intend to write to you very soon again, and hope I may do so within the week." These few commonplace words had a great meaning to my mind, however little they might convey to her I wrote them to; and as I read them over, I stored them with details supplied by imagination, — details so full of incident and catastrophe that they made a perfect story. After this I lay down and slept heavily.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DARK-ROOM PICTURE.

My next letter to my mother was very short, and ran thus:—

“DEAREST MAMMA,—Don’t be shocked at my bad writing, for I had a fall on Tuesday last, and hurt my arm a little; nothing broken, but bruised and sore to move, so that I lie on my bed and read novels. Madame never leaves me, but sits here to put ice on my shoulder and play chess with me. She reads out Balzac for me, and I don’t know when I had such a jolly life. It was a rather big hurdle, and the mare took it sideways, and caught her hind leg, — at least they say so, — but we came down together, and she rolled over me. Papa cried out well done, for I did not lose my saddle, and he has given me a gold watch and a seal with the Norcott crest. Every one is so kind; and Captain Hotham comes up after dinner and tells me all the talk of the table, and we smoke and have our coffee very nicely.

“Papa comes every night before supper, and is very good to me. He says that Blossom is now my own, but I must teach her to come cooler to her fences. I can’t write more, for my pain comes back when I stir my arm. You shall hear of me constantly, if I cannot write myself.

“Oh, dearest mamma, when papa is kind there is no one like him, — so gentle, so thoughtful, so soft in manner, and so dignified all the while. I wish you could see him as he stood here. A thousand loves from your own boy,

“DIGBY.”

Madame Cleremont wrote by the same post. I did not see her letter; but when mamma’s answer came I knew it must have been a serious version of my accident, and told how, besides a dislocated shoulder, I had got a broken collar-bone, and two ribs fractured. With all this, how-

ever, there was no danger to life; for the doctor said everything had gone luckily, and no internal parts were wounded.

Poor mamma had added a postscript that puzzled Madame greatly, and she came and showed it to me, and asked what I thought she could do about it. It was an entreaty that she might be permitted to come and see me. There was a touching humility in the request that almost choked me with emotion as I read it. "I could come and go unknown and unnoticed," wrote she. "None of Sir Roger's household have ever seen me, and my visit might pass for the devotion of some old follower of the family, and I will promise not to repeat it." She urged her plea in the most beseeching terms, and said that she would submit to any conditions if her prayer were only complied with.

"I really do not know what to do here," said Madame to me. "Without your father's concurrence this cannot be done; and who is to ask him for permission?"

"Shall I?"

"No, no, no," cried she, rapidly. "Such a step on your part would be ruin; a certain refusal, and ruin to yourself."

"Could Mr. Eccles do it?"

"He has no influence whatever."

"Has Captain Hotham?"

"Less, if less be possible."

"Mr. Cleremont, then?"

"Ah, yes, he might, and with a better chance of success; but—" She stopped, and though I waited patiently, she did not finish her sentence.

"But what?" asked I at last.

"Gaston hates doing a hazardous thing," said she; and I remarked that her expression changed, and her face assumed a hard, stern look as she spoke. "His theory is, do nothing without three to one in your favor. He says you'll always get these odds, if you only wait."

"But you don't believe that," cried I, eagerly.

"Sometimes—very seldom, that is, I do not whenever I can help it." There was a long pause now, in which neither of us spoke. At last she said, "I can't aid your mother in

this project. She must give it up. There is no saying how your father would resent it."

"And how will you tell her that?" faltered I out.

"I can't tell. I'll try and show her the mischief it might bring upon you; and that now, standing high, as you do, in your father's favor, she would never forgive herself, if she were the cause of a change towards you. This consideration will have more weight with her than any that could touch herself personally."

"But it shall not," cried I, passionately. "Nothing in *my* fortune shall stand between my mother and her love for me."

She bent down and looked at me with an intensity in her stare that I cannot describe; it was as if, by actual steadfastness, she was able to fix me, and read me in my inmost heart.

"From which of your parents, Digby," said she, slowly, "do you derive this nature?"

"I do not know; papa always says I am very like him."

"And do you believe that papa is capable of great self-sacrifice? I mean, would he let his affections lead him against his interests?"

"That he would! He has told me over and over the head is as often wrong as right, — the heart only errs about once in five times." She fell on my neck and kissed me as I said this, with a sort of rapturous delight. "Your heart will be always right, dear boy," said she; once more she bent down and kissed me, and then hurried away.

This scene must have worked more powerfully on my nerves than I felt, or was aware of, while it was passing; at all events, it brought back my fever, and before night I was in wild delirium. Of the seven long weeks that followed, with all their alternations, I know nothing. My first consciousness was to know myself, as very weak and propped by pillows, in a half-darkened room, in which an old nurse-tender sat and mingled her heavy snorings with the ticking of the clock on the chimney. Thus drowsily pondering, with a debilitated brain, I used to fancy that I had passed away into another form of existence, in which no sights or sounds should come but these dreary breath-

ings, and that remorseless ticking that seemed to be spelling out "eternity."

Sometimes one, sometimes two or three persons would enter the room, approach the bed, and talk together in whispers, and I would languidly lift up my eyes and look at them, and though I thought they were not altogether unknown to me, the attempt at recognition would have been an effort so full of pain that I would, rather than make it, fall back again into apathy. The first moment of perfect consciousness — when I could easily follow all that I heard, and remember it afterwards — was one evening, when a faint but delicious air came in through the open window, and the rich fragrance of the garden filled the room. Captain Hotham and the doctor were seated on the balcony smoking and chatting.

"You're sure the tobacco won't be bad for him?" asked Hotham.

"Nothing will be bad or good now," was the answer. "Effusion has set in."

"Which means, that it's all over, eh?"

"About one in a thousand, perhaps, rub through. My own experience records no instance of recovery."

"And you certainly did not take such a gloomy view of his case at first. You told me that there were no vital parts touched?"

"Neither were there; the ribs had suffered no displacement, and as for a broken clavicle, I've known a fellow get up and finish his race after it. This boy was doing famously. I don't know that I ever saw a case going on better, when some of them here — it's not easy to say whom — sent off for his mother to come and see him. Of course, without Norcott's knowledge. It was a rash thing to do, and not well done either; for when the woman arrived, there was no preparation made, either with the boy or herself, for their meeting; and the result was that when she crossed the threshold and saw him she fainted away. The youngster tried to get to her and fainted too; a great hubbub and noise followed; and Norcott himself appeared. The scene that ensued must have been, from what I heard, terrific. He either ordered the woman out of the house, or he dragged

her away, — it's not easy to say which; but it is quite clear that he went absolutely mad with passion: some say that he told them to pack off the boy along with her, but, of course, this was sheer impossibility; the boy was insensible, and has been so ever since."

"I was at Namur that day, but they told me when I came back that Cleremont's wife had behaved so well; that she had the courage to face Norcott; and though I don't believe she did much by her bravery, she drove him off the field to his own room, and when his wife did leave the house for the railroad, it was in one of Norcott's carriages, and Madame herself accompanied her."

"Is she his wife? that's the question."

"There's not a doubt of it. Blenkworth of the Grays was at the wedding."

"If I were to be examined before a commission of lunacy to-morrow," said the doctor, solemnly, "I'd call that man insane."

"And you'd shut him up?"

"I'd shut him up!"

"Then I'm precious glad you are not called on to give an opinion, for you'd shut up the best house in this quarter of Europe."

"And what security have you any moment that he won't make a clean sweep of it, and turn you all into the streets?"

"Yes; that's on the cards any day."

"He must have got through almost everything he had; besides, I never heard his property called six thousand a year, and I'll swear twelve would n't pay his way here."

"What does he care! His father and he agreed to cut off the entail; and seeing the sort of marriage he made, he'll not fret much at leaving the boy a beggar."

"But he likes him; if there's anything in the world he cares for, it's that boy!"

The other must have made some gesture of doubt or dissent, for the doctor quickly added, "No, no, I'm right about that. It was only yesterday morning he said to me with a shake in the voice there's no mistaking, 'If you can come and tell me, doctor, that he's out of danger, I'll give you a thousand pounds.'"

"Egad, I think I'd have done it, even though I might have made a blunder."

"Ye're no a doctor, sir, that's plain;" and in the emotion of the moment he spoke the words with a strong Scotch accent.

There was a silence of some minutes, and Hotham said, "That little Frenchwoman and I have no love lost between us, but I'm glad she cut up so well."

"They're strange natures, there's no denying it. They'll do less from duty and more from impulse than any people in the world, and they're never thoroughly proud of themselves except when they're all wrong."

"That's a neat character for Frenchwomen," said Hotham, laughing.

"I think Norcott will be looking out for his whist by this time," said the other; and they both arose, and passing noiselessly through the room, moved away.

I had enough left me to think over, and I did think over it till I fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

MADAME CLEREMONT.

FROM that day forth I received no tidings of my mother. Whether my own letters reached her or not, I could not tell; and though I entreated Madame Cleremont, who was now my confidante in everything, to aid me in learning where my mother was, she declared that the task was beyond her; and at last, as time went over, my anxieties became blunted and my affections dulled. The life I was leading grew to have such a hold upon me, and was so full of its own varied interests, that—with shame I say it—I actually forgot the very existence of her to whom I owed any trace of good or honest or truthful that was in me.

The house in which I was living was a finishing school for every sort of dissipation, and all who frequented it were people who only lived for pleasure. Play of the highest kind went on unceasingly, and large sums were bandied about from hand to hand as carelessly as if all were men of fortune and indifferent to heavy losses.

A splendid mode of living, sumptuous dinners, a great retinue, and perfect liberty to the guests, drew around us that class who, knowing well that they have no other occupation than self-indulgence, throw an air of languid elegance over vice, which your vulgar sinner, who has only intervals of wickedness, knows nothing of; and this, be it said passingly, is, of all sections of society, the most seductive and dangerous to the young: for there are no outrages to taste amongst these people, they violate no decencies, they shock no principles. If they smash the tables of the law, it is in kid-gloves, and with a delicious odor of Ess bouquet about them. The Cleremonts lived at the Villa. Cleremont

managed the household, and gave the orders for everything. Madame received the company, and did the honors; my father lounging about like an unoccupied guest, and actually amused, as it seemed, by his own unimportance. Hotham had gone to sea; but Eccles remained, in name, as my tutor; but we rarely met, save at meal-times, and his manner to me was almost slavish in subserviency, and with a habit of flattery that, even young as I was, revolted me.

"Is n't that your charge, Eccles?" I once heard an old gentleman ask him; and he replied, "Yes, my Lord; but Madame Cleremont has succeeded me. It is *she* is finishing him."

And they both laughed heartily at the joke. There was, however, this much of truth in the speech, that I lived almost entirely in her society. We sang together; she called me Cherubino, and taught me all the page's songs in Mozart or Rossini; and we rode out together, or read or walked in company. Nor was her influence over me such as might effeminate me. On the contrary, it was ever her aim to give me manly tastes and ambitions. She laid great stress on my being a perfect swordsman and a pistol-shot, over and over telling me that a conscious skill in arms gives a man immense coolness in every question of difference with other men; and she would add, "Don't fall into that John Bull blunder of believing that duelling is gone out because they dislike the practice in England. The world is happily larger than the British Islands."

Little sneers like this at England, sarcasms on English prudery, English reserve, or English distrustfulness, were constantly dropping from her, and I grew up to believe that while genuine sentiment and unselfish devotion lived on one side of the Channel, a decorous hypocrisy had its home on the other.

Now she would contrast the women of Balzac's novels with the colder nonentities of English fiction; and now she would dwell on traits of fascination in the sex which our writers either did not know of or were afraid to touch on. "It is entirely the fault of your Englishwomen," she would say, "that the men invariably fall victims to foreign seductions. Circe always sings with a bronchitis in the North;"

and though I but dimly saw what she pointed at then, I lived to perceive her meaning more fully.

As for my father, I saw little of him, but in that little he was always kind and good-natured with me. He would quiz me about my lessons, as though I were the tutor, and Eccles the pupil; and ask me how he got on with his Aristophanes or his Homer? He talked to me freely about the people who came to the house, and treated me almost as an equal. All this time he behaved to Madame with a reserve that was perfectly chilling, so that it was the rarest thing in the world for the three of us to be together.

"I don't think you like papa," said I once to her, in an effusion of confidence. "I am sure you don't like him!"

"And why do you think so?" asked she, with the faintest imaginable flush on her pale cheek.

While I was puzzling myself what to answer, she said, —

"Come now, Cherubino, what you really meant to say was, I don't think papa likes *you*!"

Though I never could have made so rude a speech, its truth and force struck me so palpably that I could not answer.

"Well," cried she, with a little laugh, "he is very fond of Monsieur Cleremont, and that ought always to be enough for Madame Cleremont. Do you know, Cherubino, it's the rarest thing in life for a husband and wife to be liked by the same people? There is in conjugal life some beautiful little ingredient of discord that sets the two partners to the compact at opposite poles, and gives them separate followings. I mustn't distract you with the theory, I only want you to see why liking my husband is sufficient reason for not caring for me."

Now, as I liked her exceedingly, and felt something very near to hatred for Monsieur Cleremont, I accepted all she said as incontestable truth. Still I grieved over the fact that papa was not of my own mind, and did not see her and all her fascinations as I did.

There is something indescribably touching in the gentle sadness of certain buoyant bright natures. Like the low notes in a treble voice, there is that that seems to vibrate in our hearts at a most susceptible moment, and with the

force of an unforeseen contrast; and it was thus that, in her graver times, she won over me an ascendancy, and inspired an interest which, had I been other than a mere boy, had certainly been love.

Perhaps I should not have been even conscious, as I was, of this sentiment, if it were not for the indignation I felt at Cleremont's treatment of her. Over and over again my temper was pushed to its last limit by his brutality and coarseness. His tone was a perpetual sneer, and his wife seldom spoke before him without his directing towards her a sarcasm or an impertinence. This was especially remarkable if she uttered any sentiment at all elevated, when his banter would be ushered in with a burst of derisive laughter.

Nothing could be more perfect than the way she bore these trials. There was no assumed martyrdom, no covert appeal for sympathy, no air of suffering asking for protection. No! whether it came as ridicule or rebuke, she accepted it gently and good-humoredly; trying, when she could, to turn it off with a laugh, or when too grave for that, bearing it with quiet forbearance.

I often wondered why my father did not check these persecutions, for they were such, and very cruel ones too; but he scarcely seemed to notice them, or if he did, it would be by a smile, far more like enjoyment of Cleremont's coarse wit than reprehending or reproving it.

"I wonder how that woman stands it?" I once overheard Hotham say to Eccles; and the other replied, —

"I don't think she *does* stand it. I mistake her much if she is as forgiving as she looks."

Why do I recall these things? Why do I dwell on incidents and passages which had no actual bearing on my own destiny? Only because they serve to show the terrible school in which I was brought up; the mingled dissipation, splendor, indolence, and passion in which my boyhood was passed. Surrounded by men of reckless habits, and women but a mere shade better, life presented itself to me as one series of costly pleasures, dashed only with such disappointments as loss at play inflicted, or some project of intrigue baffled or averted.

"If that boy of Norcott's is n't a scamp, he must be a most unteachable young rascal," said an old colonel once to Eccles on the croquet ground.

"He has had great opportunities," said Eccles, as he sent off his ball, "and, so far as I see, neglected none of them."

"You were his tutor, I think?" said the other, with a laugh.

"Yes, till Madame Cleremont took my place."

"I'll not say it was the worst thing could have happened him. I wish it had been a woman had spoiled *me*. Eh, Eccles, possibly you may have some such misgivings yourself?"

"I was never corrupted," said the other, with a sententious gravity whose hypocrisy was palpable.

I meditated many and many a time over these few words, and they suggested to me the first attempt I ever made to know something about myself and my own nature.

Those stories of Balzac's, those wonderful pictures of passionate life, acquired an immense hold upon me, from the very character of my own existence. That terrific game of temper against temper, mind against mind, and heart against heart, of which I read in these novels, I was daily witnessing in what went on around me, and I amused myself by giving the names of the characters in these fictions to the various persons of our society.

"It is a very naughty little world we live in at this house, Digby," said Madame to me one day; "but you'd be surprised to find what a very vulgar thing is the life of people in general, and that if you want the sensational, or even the pictorial in existence, you'll have to pay for it in some compromise of principle."

"I know mamma would n't like to live here," said I, half sullenly.

"Oh, mamma!" cried she, with a laugh, and then suddenly checking herself: "No, Digby, you are quite right. Mamma would be shocked at our doings; not that they are so very wicked in themselves as that, to one of her quiet ways, they would seem so."

"Mamma is very good. I never knew any one like her," stammered I out.

"That's quite true, my dear boy. She is all that you say, but one may be too good, just as he may be too generous or too confiding; and it is well to remember that there are a number of excellent things one would like to be if they could afford them; but the truth is, Digby, the most costly of all things are virtues."

"~~Oh, do not say that!~~" cried I, eagerly.

"Yes, dear, I must say it. Monsieur Cleremont and I have always been very poor, and we never permitted ourselves these luxuries, any more than we kept a great house and a fine equipage, and so we economize in our morals, as in our means, doing what rich folk might call little shabbinesses; but, on the whole, managing to live, and not unhappily either."

"And papa?"

"Papa has a fine estate, wants for nothing, and can give himself every good quality he has a fancy for."

"By this theory, then, it is only rich people are good?"

"Not exactly. I would rather state it thus, — the rich are as good as they like to be; the poor are as good as they're able."

"What do you say, then, to Mr. Eccles: he's not rich, and I'm sure he's good?"

"Poor Mr. Eccles!" said she, with a merry laughter, in which a something scornful mingled, and she hurried away.

CHAPTER X.

PLANNING PLEASURE.

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It was my father's pleasure to celebrate my sixteenth birthday with great splendor. The whole house was to be thrown open; and not only the house, but the conservatory and the grounds were to be illuminated. The festivities were to comprise a grand dinner and a reception afterwards, which was to become a ball, as if by an impromptu.

As the society of the Villa habitually was made up of a certain number of intimates, relieved, from time to time, by such strangers as were presented, and as my father never dined out, or went into the fashionable world of the place, it was somewhat of a bold step at once to invite a number of persons with whom we had no more than bowing acquaintance, and to ask to his table ministers, envoys, court officials, and grand chamberlains for the first time. It was said, I know not how truthfully, that Cleremont did his utmost to dissuade him from the project at first, by disparaging the people for whom he was putting himself to such cost, and, finding this line of no avail, by openly saying that what between the refusals of some, the excuses of others, and the actual absence of many whose presence he was led to expect, my father was storing up for himself an amount of disappointment and outrage that would drive him half desperate. It was not, of course, very easy to convey this to my father. It could only be done by a dropping word or a half-expressed doubt. And when the time came to make out the lists and issue the invitations, no real step had been taken to turn him from his plan.

The same rumor which ascribed to Cleremont the repute of attempting to dissuade my father from his project, attrib-

uted to Madame Cleremont a most eager and warm advocacy of the intended *fête*. From the marked coldness and reserve, however, which subsisted between my father and her, it was too difficult to imagine in what way her influence could be exercised.

And for my own part, though I heard the list of the company canvassed every day at luncheon, and discussed at dinner, I don't remember an occasion where Madame ever uttered a word of remark, or even a suggestion in the matter. Hotham, who had come back on a short leave, was full of the scheme. With all a sailor's love of movement and bustle, he mixed himself up with every detail of it. He wrote to Paris and London for all the delicacies of the "comestible" shops. He established "estafettes" on every side to bring in fresh flowers and fruit; with his own hands he rigged out tents and marquees for the regimental bands, which were to be stationed in different parts of the grounds; and all the devices of Bengal lights and fireworks he took into his especial charge.

Indeed, Nixon told me that his functions did not stop here, but that he had charged himself with the care of Madame Cleremont's toilette, for whom he had ordered the most splendid ball-dress Paris could produce. "Naturally, Master Digby, it is Sir Roger pays," added he; "and perhaps one of these days he'll be surprised to find that diamond loops and diamond bouquets should figure in a milliner's bill. But as she is to receive the company, of course it's all right."

"And why does Mr. Cleremont seem to dislike it all so much?" asked I.

"Chiefly, I believe, because *she* likes it." And then, as though he had said more than he intended, he added: "Oh, it's easy to see he likes to keep this house as much his own as he can. He does n't want Sir Roger to have other people about him. He's almost the master here now; but if your father begins to mix with the world, and have strangers here, Cleremont's reign would soon be over."

Though there was much in this speech to suggest thought and speculation, nothing in it struck me so forcibly as the impertinence of calling Mr. Cleremont Cleremont, and it

was all I could do to suppress the rebuke that was on my lips.

"If your father comes through for a thousand pounds, sir," continued he, "I'll say he's lucky. If Sir Roger would leave it to one person to give the orders, — I don't mean myself, — though by right it is my business; instead of that, there's the Captain sending for this, and Cleremont for the other, and you'll see there will be enough for three entertainments when it's all over. Could you just say a word to him, sir?"

"Not for the world, Nixon. Papa is very kind to me and good-natured, but I'll not risk any liberty with him; and what's more, I'd be right sorry to call Mr. Cleremont Cleremont before him, as you have done twice within the last five minutes."

"Lord bless you, Master Digby! I've known him these fifteen years. I knew him when he came out, just a boy like, to Lord Colthorpe's embassy. He and I is like pals."

"You have known *me* also as a boy, Nixon," said I, haughtily; "and yet, I promise you, I'll not permit you to speak of me as Norcott, when I am a man."

"No fear of that, sir, you may depend on 't," said he, with humility; but there was a malicious twinkle in his eye, and a firm compression of the lip as he withdrew, that did not leave my mind the whole day after. Indeed, I recognized that his face had assumed the selfsame look of insolent familiarity it wore when he spoke of Cleremont.

The evening of that day was passed filling up the cards of invitation, — a process which amused me greatly, affording, as it did, a sort of current critique on the persons whose names came up for notice, and certainly, if I were to judge of their eligibility only by what I heard of their characters, I might well feel amazed why they were singled out for attentions. They were marquises and counts, however, chevaliers of various orders, grand cordons and "hautes charges," so that their trespasses or their shortcomings had all been enacted in the world of good society, and with each other as accomplices or victims. There were a number of contingencies, too, attached to almost every name. There must be high play for the Russian envoy, flirting for the French

minister's wife, iced drinks for the Americans, and scandal and Ostend oysters for everybody. There was scarcely a good word for any one, and yet the most eager anxiety was expressed that they would all come. Immense precautions had been taken to fix a day when there was nothing going on at court or in the court circle. It was difficult to believe that pleasure could be planned with such heart-burning and bitterness. There was scarcely a detail that did not come associated with something that reflected on the morals or the manners of the dear friends we were entreating to honor us; and for the life of me I did not know why such pains were taken to secure the presence of people for whom none had a good wish nor a single kindly thought.

My father took very little part in the discussion; he sat there with a sort of proud indifference, as though the matter had little interest for him, and if a doubt were expressed as to the likelihood of this or that person's acceptance, he would superciliously break in with, "He'll come, sir: I'll answer for that. I have never yet played to empty benches."

This vain and haughty speech dwelt in my mind for many a day, and showed me how my father deemed that it was not his splendid style of living, his exquisite dinners, and his choice wines that drew guests around him, but his own especial qualities as host and entertainer.

"But that it involves the bore of an audience, I'd ask the king; I could give him some Château d'Yquem very unlike his own, and such as, I'll venture to say, he never tasted," said he, affectedly.

"So you are going to bring out the purple seal?" cried Cleremont.

"I might for royalty, sir; but not for such people as I read of in that list there."

"Why, here are two Dukes with their Duchesses, Marquises and Counts by the score, half-a-dozen ministers plenipotentiary, and a perfect cloud of chamberlains and court swells."

"They'd cut a great figure, I've no doubt, Hotham, on the quarter-deck of the 'Thunder Bomb,' where you eke out the defects of a bad band with a salute from your big guns, and give your guests the national anthem when

they want champagne. Oh dear, there's no snob like a sailor!"

"Well, if they're not good enough for you, why the devil do you ask them?" cried Hotham, sturdily.

"Sir, if I were to put such a question to myself, I might shut up my house to-morrow!" And with this very uncourtous speech he arose and left the room.

We continued, however, to fill in the cards of invitation and address the envelopes, but with little inclination to converse, and none whatever to refer to what had passed.

"There," cried Cleremont, as he checked off the list. "That makes very close on seven hundred. I take it I may order supper for six hundred." Then turning half fiercely to me, he added: "Do you know, youngster, that all this tomfoolery is got up for *you*? It is by way of celebrating your birthday we're going to turn the house out of the windows!"

"I suppose my father has that right, sir."

"Of course he has, just as he would have the right to make a ruin of the place to-morrow if he liked it; but I don't fancy his friends would be the better pleased with him for his amiable eccentricity: your father pushes our regard for him very far sometimes."

"I'll tell him to be more cautious, sir, in future," said I, moving towards the door.

"Do so," said he. "Good-night."

I had scarcely taken my bedroom candle when I felt a hand on my shoulder: I turned and saw Madame Cleremont standing very pale and in great agitation at my side. "Oh, Digby," said she, "don't make that man your enemy whatever you do; he is more than a match for you, poor child!" She was about to say more when we heard voices in the corridor, and she hurried away and left me.

CHAPTER XI.

A BIRTHDAY DINNER.

THE eventful day arrived at last, and now, as I write, I can bring up before me the whole of that morning, so full of exciting sensations and of pleasurable surprises. I wandered about from room to room, never sated with the splendors around me. Till then I had not seen the gorgeous furniture uncovered, nor had I the faintest idea of the beauty and richness of the silk hangings, or the glittering elegance of those lustres of pure Venetian glass. Perhaps nothing, however, astonished me so much as the array of gold and silver plate in the dining-room. Our every-day dinners had been laid out with what had seemed to me a most costly elegance; but what were they to this display of splendid centrepieces and massive cups and salvers large as shields! Of flowers, the richest and rarest, wagon-loads poured in; and at last I saw the horses taken out, and carts full of carnations and geraniums left unloaded in the stable-yard. Ice, too, came in the same profusion: those squarely cut blocks, bright as crystal, and hollowed out to serve as wine-coolers, and take their place amidst the costlier splendors of gold and silver.

It is rare to hear the servant class reprove profusion; but here I overheard many a comment on the reckless profligacy of outlay which had provided for this occasion enough for a dozen such. It was easy to see, they said, that Mr. Cleremont did not pay; and this sneer sunk deep into my mind, increasing the dislike I already felt for him.

Nor was it the house alone was thus splendidly prepared for reception; but kiosks and tents were scattered through the grounds, in each of which, as if by magic, supper could be served on the instant. Upwards of thirty additional ser-

vants were engaged, all of whom were dressed in our state livery, white, with silver epaulettes, and the Norcott crest embroidered on the arm. These had been duly drilled by Mr. Cleremont, and were not, he said, to be distinguished by the most critical eye from the rest of the household.

Though there was movement everywhere, and everywhere activity, there was little or no confusion. Cleremont was an adept in organization, and already his skill and cleverness had spread discipline through the mass. He was a despot, however, would not permit the slightest interference with his functions, nor accept a suggestion from any one. "Captain Hotham gives no orders here," I heard him say; and when standing under my window, and I am almost sure seeing me, he said, "Master Digby has nothing to do with the arrangements any more than yourself."

I had determined that day to let nothing irritate or vex me; that I would give myself up to unmixed enjoyment, and make this birthday a memorable spot in life, to look back on with undiluted delight. I could have been more certain to carry out this resolve if I could only have seen and spoken with Madame Cleremont; but she did not leave her room the whole day. A distinguished hairdresser had arrived with a mysterious box early in the morning, and after passing two hours engaged with her, had returned for more toilet requirements. In fact, from the coming and going of maids and dressmakers, it was evident that the preparations of beauty were fully equal to those that were being made by cooks and confectioners.

My father, too, was invisible; his breakfast was served in his own room; and when Cleremont wished to communicate with him, he had to do so in writing: and these little notes passed unceasingly between them till late in the afternoon.

"What's up now?" I heard Hotham say, as Cleremont tore up a note in pieces and flung the fragments from him with impatience.

"Just like him. I knew exactly how it would be," cried the other. "He sent a card of invitation to the Duc de Bredar without first making a visit; and here comes the Duc's chasseur to say that his Excellency has not the honor

of knowing the gentleman who has been so gracious as to ask him to dinner."

"Norcott will have him out for the impertinence," said Hotham.

"And what will that do? Will the shooting him or the being shot make this dinner go off as we meant it, eh? Is that for me, Nixon? Give it here." He took a note as he spoke, and tore it open. "'La Marquise de Carnac is engaged,' not a word more. The world is certainly progressing in politeness. Three cards came back this day with the words 'Sent by mistake' written on them. Norcott does not know it yet, nor shall he till to-morrow."

"Is it true that the old Countess de Joieville begged to know who was to receive the ladies invited?"

"Yes, it is true; and I told her a piece of her own early history in return, to assure her that no accident of choice should be any bar to the hope of seeing her."

"What was the story?"

"I'd tell it if that boy of Norcott's was not listening there at that window."

"Yes, sir," cried I; "I have heard every word, and mean to repeat it to my father when I see him."

"Tell him at the same time, then, that his grand dinner of twenty-eight has now come down to seventeen, and I'm not fully sure of three of these."

I went down into the dining-room, and saw that places had been laid for twenty-eight, and as yet no alteration had been made in the table, so that it at once occurred to me this speech of Cleremont's was a mere impertinence, — one of those insolent sallies he was so fond of. Nixon, too, had placed the name of each guest on his napkin, and he, at least, had not heard of any apologies.

Given in my honor, as this dinner was, I felt a most intense interest in its success. I was standing, as it were, on the threshold of life, and regarded the mode in which I should be received as an augury of good or evil. My father's supremacy at home, the despotism he wielded, and the respect and deference he exacted, led me to infer that he exercised the same influence on the world at large; and that, as I had often heard, the only complaint against him in

society was his exclusiveness. I canvassed these thoughts with myself for hours, as I sat alone in my room waiting till it was time to dress.

At last eight o'clock struck, and I went down into the drawing-room. Hotham was there, in a window recess, conversing in whispers with an Italian count, — one of our intimates, but of whom I knew nothing. They took no notice of me, so that I took up a paper and began to read. Cleremont came in soon after with a bundle of notes in his hand. "Has your father come down?" asked he, hastily; and then, without waiting for my reply, he turned and left the room. Madame next appeared. I have no words for my admiration of her, as, splendidly dressed and glittering with diamonds, she swept proudly in. That her beauty could have been so heightened by mere toilette seemed incredible, and as she read my wonderment in my face she smiled, and said:—

"Yes, Digby, I am looking my very best to *fête* your birthday."

I would have liked to have told her how lovely she appeared to me, but I could only blush and gaze wonderingly on her.

"Button this glove, dear," said she, handing to me her wrist all weighted and jingling with costly bracelets; and while, with trembling fingers, I was trying to obey her, my father entered and came towards us. He made her a low but very distant bow, tapped me familiarly on the shoulder, and then moved across to an arm-chair and sat down.

Cleremont now came in, and, drawing a chair beside my father's, leaned over and said something in a whisper. Not seeming to attend to what he was saying, my father snatched, rather than took, the bundle of letters he held in his hand, ran his eyes eagerly over some of them, and then, crushing the mass in his grasp, he threw it into the fire.

"It is forty minutes past eight," said he, calmly, but with a deadly pallor in his face. "Can any one tell me if that clock be right?"

"It is eight or ten minutes slow," said Hotham.

"Whom do we wait for, Cleremont?" asked my father again.

"Steinmetz was *de service* with the King, but would come if he got free; and there's Rochegude, the French Secretary, was to replace his chief. I'm not quite sure about the Walronda, but Craydon told me positively to expect *him*."

"Do me the favor to ring the bell and order dinner," said my father; and he spoke with measured calm.

"Won't you wait a few minutes?" whispered Cleremont. "The Duke de Frialmont, I'm sure, will be here."

"No, sir; we live in a society that understands and observes punctuality. No breach of it is accidental. Dinner, Nixon!" added he, as the servant appeared.

The folding-doors were thrown wide almost at once, and dinner announced. My father gave his arm to Madame Cleremont, who actually tottered as she walked beside him, and as she sat down seemed on the verge of fainting. Just as we took our places, three young men, somewhat overdressed, entered hurriedly, and were proceeding to make their apologies for being late; but my father, with a chilling distance, assured them they were in excellent time, and motioned them to be seated.

Of the table laid for twenty-eight guests, nine places were occupied; and these, by some mischance, were scattered here and there with wide intervals. Madame Cleremont sat on my father's right, and three empty places flanked his left hand.

I sat opposite my father, with two vacant seats on either side of me; Hotham nearest to me, and one of the strangers beside him. They conversed in a very low tone, but short snatches and half sentences reached me; and I heard the stranger say, "It was too bold a step; women are sure to resent such attempts." Madame Cleremont's name, too, came up three or four times; and the stranger said, "It's my first dinner here, and the Bredars will not forgive me for coming."

"Well, there's none of them has such a cook as Norcott," said Hotham.

"I quite agree with you; but I'd put up with a worse dinner for better company."

I looked round at this to show I had heard the remark, and from that time they conversed in a whisper.

My father never uttered a word during the dinner. I do not know if he ate, but he helped himself and affected to eat. As for Madame, how she sat out those long two hours, weak and fainting as she was, I cannot tell. I saw her once try to lift her glass to her lips, but her hand trembled so, she set it down untasted, and lay back in her chair, like one dying out of exhaustion.

A few words and a faint attempt to laugh once or twice broke the dead silence of the entertainment, which proceeded, however, in all its stately detail, course after course, till the dessert was handed round, and Tokay, in small gilt glasses, was served; then my father rose slowly, and, drawing himself up to his full height, looked haughtily around him. "May I ask my illustrious friends," said he, "who have this day so graciously honored me with their presence, to drink the health of my son, whose birthday we celebrate. There is no happier augury on entering life than to possess the friendship and good-will of those who stand foremost in the world's honor. It is his great privilege to be surrounded this day by beauty and by distinction. The great in the arts of peace and war, and that loveliness which surpasses in its fascination all other rewards, are around me, and I call upon these to drink to the health of Digby Norcott."

All rose and drank; Hotham lifted his glass high in air and tried a cheer, but none joined him; his voice died away, and he sat down; and for several minutes an unbroken silence prevailed.

My father at last leaned over towards Madame, and I heard the word "coffee." She arose and took his arm, and we all followed them to the drawing-room.

"I'm right glad it's over," said Hotham, as he poured his brandy over his coffee. "I've sat out a court-martial that was n't slower than that dinner."

"But what's the meaning of it all?" asked another. "Why and how came all these apologies?"

"You'd better ask Cleremont, or rather his wife," muttered Hotham, and moved away.

"You ought to get into the open air; that's the best thing for you," I heard Cleremont say to his wife; but there

was such a thorough indifference in the tone, it sounded less like a kindness than a sarcasm. She, however, drew a shawl around her, and moved down the steps into the garden. My father soon after retired to his own room, and Cleremont laughingly said, "There are no women here, and we may have a cigar;" and he threw his case across the table. The whole party were soon immersed in smoke.

I saw that my presence imposed some restraint on the conversation, and soon sought my room with a much sadder spirit and a heavier heart than I had left it two hours before.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BALL.

Musing and thinking and fretting together, I had fallen asleep on my sofa, and was awakened by Mr. Nixon lighting my candles, and asking me, in a very mild voice, if I felt unwell.

"No, nothing of the kind."

"Won't you go down, sir, then? It's past eleven now, and there's a good many people below."

"Who have come?" asked I, eagerly.

"Well, sir," said he, with a certain degree of hesitation, "they're not much to talk about. There's eight or nine young gentlemen of the embassies — attachés like — and there's fifteen or twenty officers of the Guides, and there's some more that look like travellers out of the hotels; they ain't in evening-dress."

"Are there no ladies?"

"Yes; I suppose we must call them ladies, sir. There's Madame Rigault and her two daughters."

"The pastrycook?"

"Yes, sir; and there are the Demoiselles Janson, of the cigar-shop, and stunningly dressed they are too! Amber satin with black lace, and Spanish veils on their heads. And there's that little Swedish girl — I believe she's a Swede — that sells the iced drinks."

"But what do you mean? These people have not been invited. How have they come here?"

"Well, sir, I must n't tell you a lie; but I hope you'll not betray me if I speak in confidence to you. Here's how it all has happened. The swells all refused: they agreed together that they'd not come to dinner, nor come in the evening. Mr. Cleremont knows why; but it ain't for me to say it."

"But *I* don't know, and I desire to know!" cried I, haughtily.

"Well, indeed, sir, it's more than I can tell you. There's people here not a bit correcter than herself that won't meet her."

"Meet whom?"

"Madame, sir, — Madame Cleremont."

"Don't dare to say another word," cried I, passionately. "If you utter a syllable of disrespect to that name, I'll fling you out of the window."

"Don't be afraid, Master Digby, I know my station, and I never forget it, sir. I was only telling you what you asked me, not a word more. The swells sent back your father's cards, and there's more than three hundred of them returned."

"And where's papa now?"

"In bed, sir. He told his valet he was n't to be disturbed, except the house took fire."

"Is Madame Cleremont below?"

"No, sir; she's very ill. The doctor has been with her, and he's coming again to-night."

"And are these people — this rabble that you talk of — received as my papa's guests?"

"Only in a sort of a way, sir," said he, smiling. "You see that when Mr. Cleremont perceived that there was nothing but excuses and apologies pouring in, he told me to close the house, and that we'd let all the bourgeois people into the grounds, and give them a jolly supper and plenty of champagne; and he sent word to a many of the young officers to come up and have a lark; and certainly, as the supper was there, they might as well eat it. The only puzzle is now, won't there be too many, for he sent round to all Sir Roger's tradespeople, — all at least that has good-looking daughters, — and they're pourin' in by tens and fifteens, and right well dressed and well got up too."

"And what will papa say to all this to-morrow?"

"Don't you know, sir, that Sir Roger seldom looks back," said he, with a cunning look; "he'll not be disturbed to-night, for the house is shut up, and the bands are playing, one at the lake, the other at the end of the

long walk, and the suppers will be served here and there, where they can cheer and drink toasts without annoying any one."

"It's a downright infamy!" cried I.

"It ain't the correct thing, sure enough, sir, there's none of us could say that, but it will be rare fun; and, as Captain Hotham said, "the women are a precious sight better looking than the countesses.'"

"Where is Mr. Eccles?"

"I saw him waltzing, sir, or maybe it was the polka, with Madame Robineau just as I was coming up to you."

"I'll go down and tell Mr. Cleremont to dismiss his friends," cried I, boiling over with anger. "Papa meant this *fête* to celebrate my birthday. I'll not accept such rabble congratulations. If Mr. Cleremont must have an orgie, let him seek for another place to give it in."

"Don't go, master, don't, I entreat you," cried he, imploringly. "You'll only make a row, sir, and bring down Sir Roger, and then who's to say what will happen? He'll have a dozen duels on his hands in half as many minutes. The officers won't stand being called to account, and Sir Roger is not the man to be sweet-tempered with them."

"And am I to see my father's name insulted, and his house dishonored by such a canaille crew as this?"

"Just come down and see them, Master Digby; prettier, nicer girls you never saw in your life, and pretty behaved, too. Ask Mr. Eccles if he ever mixed with a nicer company. There, now, sir, slip on your velvet jacket, — it looks nicer than that tail-coat, — and come down. They'll be all proud and glad to see you, and won't she hold her head high that you ask to take a turn of a waltz with you!"

"And how should I face my father to-morrow?" said I, blushing deeply.

"Might I tell you a secret, Master Digby?" said he, leaning over the table, and speaking almost in my ear.

"Go on," said I, dryly.

"I know well, sir, you'll never throw me over, and what I'm going to tell you is worth gold to you."

"Go on," cried I, for he had ceased to speak.

"Here it is, then," said he, with an effort. "The greatest

sorrow your father has, Master Digby, is that he thinks you have no spirit in you, — that you're a mollycoot. As he said one day to Mr. Cleremont, 'You must teach him everything, he has no "go" in himself; there's nothing in his nature but what somebody else put into it.'

"He never said that!"

"I pledge you my oath he did."

"Well, if he did, he meant it very differently from what you do."

"There's no two meanings to it. There's a cheer!" cried he, running over to the window and flinging it wide. "I wonder who's come now? Oh, it's the fireworks are beginning."

"I'll go down," said I; but out of what process of reasoning came that resolve I am unable to tell.

"Maybe they won't be glad to see you!" cried he, as he helped me on with my jacket and arranged the heron's feathers in my velvet cap. I was half faltering in my resolution, when I bethought me of that charge of feebleness of character Nixon had reported to me, and I determined, come what might, I would show that I had a will and could follow it. In less than five minutes after, I was standing under the trees in the garden, shaking hands with scores of people I never saw before, and receiving the very politest of compliments and good wishes from very pretty lips, aided by very expressive eyes.

"Here's Mademoiselle Pauline Delorme refuses to dance with me," cried Eccles, "since she has seen the head of the house. Digby, let me present you." And with this he led me up to a very beautiful girl, who, though only the daughter of a celebrated restaurateur of Brussels, might have been a princess, so far as look and breeding and elegance were concerned.

"This is to be the correct thing," cried Cleremont. "We open with a quadrille; take your partners, gentlemen, and to your places."

Nothing could be more perfectly proper and decorous than this dance. It is possible, perhaps, that we exceeded a little on the score of reverential observances: we bowed and courtesied at every imaginable opportunity, and with an

air of homage that smacked of a court; and if we did raise our eyes to each other, as we recovered from the obeisance, it was with a look of the softest and most subdued deference. I really began to think that the only hoydenish people I had ever seen were ladies and gentlemen. As for Eccles, he wore an air of almost reverential gravity, and Hotham was sternly composed. At last, however, we came to the finish, and Cleremont, clapping his hands thrice, called out "*grand rond*," and, taking his partner's arm within his own, led off at a galop; the music striking up one of Strauss's wildest, quickest strains. Away he went down an alley, and we all after him, stamping and laughing like mad. The sudden revulsion from the quiet of the moment before was electric; no longer arm-in-arm, but with arms close clasped around the waist, away we went over the smooth turf with a wild delight to which the music imparted a thrilling ecstasy. Now through the dense shade we broke into a blaze of light, where a great buffet stood; and round this we all swarmed at once, and glasses were filled with champagne, and vivas shouted again and again; and I heard that my health was toasted, and a very sweet voice — the lips were on my ear — whispered I know not what, but it sounded very like wishing me joy and love, while others were deafening me about long life and happiness.

I do not remember — I do not want to remember — all the nonsense I talked, and with a volubility quite new to me; my brain felt on fire with a sort of wild ecstasy, and as homage and deference met me at every step, my every wish acceded to, and each fancy that struck me hailed at once as bright inspiration, no wonder was it if I lost myself in a perfect ocean of bliss. I told Pauline she should be the queen of the *fête*, and ordered a splendid wreath of flowers to be brought, which I placed upon her brow, and saluted her with her title, amidst the cheering shouts of willing toasters. Except to make a tour of a waltz or a polka with some one I knew, I would not permit her to dance with any but myself; and she, I must say, most graciously submitted to the tyranny, and seemed to delight in the extravagant expressions of my admiration for her.

If I was madly jealous of her, I felt the most overwhelm-



Portrait of a woman in a garden

Portrait of a woman in a garden

THAT BOY OF NORCOTT'S.

age that smacked of a court; and it was eyes to each other, as we recovered from the first shock, that was with a look of the softest and most smiling countenance. I readily began to think that the only boy I had ever seen were ladies and gentlemen. As they were on an air of almost reverential gravity, and were only composed. At last, however, we went to the music, and Clément, clapping his hands, called out "grand rond" and, taking his partner's hand within his own, led off at a gallop; the music striking one of Strauss's wildest, quickest strains. Away he went down the alley, and we all after him, stamping and laughing. The sudden revolution from the quiet of the moment before was electric: no longer arm-in-arm, but with arms close clasped around the waist, away we went over the stage, and with a wild delight to which the music imparted a thrilling ecstasy. Now through the dense shade we began a blaze of light, where a great buffet stood; and round this we all swarmed at once, and glasses were filled with champagne, and vivas shouted again and again, and I heard my health was toasted, and a very sweet voice — I cannot remember — whispered I know not what, but I felt very like wishing me joy and love, while others were wishing me about long life and happiness. I do not remember — I do not want to remember — a single word I talked, and with a volubility quite new to me; my heart felt on fire with a sort of wild ecstasy, and as homage and deference met me at every step, my every wish seemed to, and each fancy that struck me hailed as a divine inspiration, no wonder was it if I lost myself in an ocean of bliss. I told Pauline she should be the queen of the *fête*, and ordered a splendid wreath to be brought, which I placed upon her brow, and surrounded her with title, amidst the cheering shouts of the guests. Except to make a tour of a waltz or polka with some one I knew, I would not permit her to dance with any but myself; and she, I must say, most graciously submitted to the tyranny, and seemed to delight in the extravagant expressions of my admiration for her.

If I was not very jealous of her, I felt the most overwhelm-



*I ordered a splendid wreath of flowers to be brought,
which I placed on her brow.*

Walter L. Collins, Ph. D.

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ing delight in the praises bestowed upon her beauty and her gracefulness. Perhaps the consciousness that I was a mere boy, and that thus a freedom might be used towards me that would have been reprehensible with one older, led her to treat me with a degree of intimacy that was positively captivating; and before our third waltz was over, I was calling her Pauline, and she calling me Digby, like old friends.

"Isn't that boy of Norcott's going it to-night?" I heard a man say as I swung past in a polka, and I turned fiercely to catch the speaker's eye, and show him I meant to call him to book.

"Eh, Eccles, your pupil is a credit to you!" cried another.

"I'm a Dutchman if that fellow does n't rival his father."

"He'll be far and away beyond him," muttered another; "for he has none of Norcott's crotchets, — he's a scamp 'pur et simple.'"

"Where are you breaking away from me, Digby?" said Pauline, as I tried to shake myself free of her.

"I want to follow those men. I have a word to say to them."

"You shall do no such thing, dearest," muttered she. "You have just told me I am to be your little wife, and I'm not going to see my husband rushing into a stupid quarrel."

"And you are mine, then," cried I, "and you will wear this ring as a betrothal? Come, let me take off your glove."

"That will do, Digby; that's quite enough for courtesy and a little too much for deference," whispered Eccles in my ear; for I was kissing her hand about a hundred times over, and she laughing at my raptures as an excellent joke. "I think you'd better lead the way to supper."

Secretly resolving that I would soon make very short work of Mr. Eccles and his admonitions, I gave him a haughty glance and moved on. I remember very little more than that I walked to the head of the table and placed Pauline on my right. I know I made some absurd speech in return for their drinking my health, and spoke of *us*, and what *we* — Pauline and myself — felt, and with what pleasure we

should see our friends often around us, and a deal of that tawdry trash that comes into a brain addled with noise and heated with wine. I was frequently interrupted; uproarious cheers at one moment would break forth, but still louder laughter would ring out and convulse the whole assembly. Even addled and confused as I was, I could see that some were my partisans and friends, who approved of all I said, and wished me to give a free course to my feelings; and there were others — two or three — who tried to stop me; and one actually said aloud, "If that boy of Norcott's is not suppressed, we shall have no supper."

Recalled to my dignity as a host by this impertinence, I believe I put some restraint on my eloquence, and I now addressed myself to do the honors of the table. Alas, my attentions seldom strayed beyond my lovely neighbor, and I firmly believed that none could remark the rapture with which I gazed on her, or as much as suspected that I had never quitted the grasp of her hand from the moment we sat down.

"I suspect you'd better let Mademoiselle dance the cotillon with the Count Vauglas," whispered Eccles in my ear.

"And why, sir?" rejoined I, half fiercely.

"I think you might guess," said he, with a smile; "at least, you could if you were to get up."

"And would she — would Pauline — I mean, would Mademoiselle Delorme — approve of this arrangement?"

"No, Monsieur Digby, not if it did not come from you. We shall sit in the shade yonder for half an hour or so, and then, when you are rested, we'll join the cotillon."

"Get that boy off to bed, Eccles," said Cleremont, who did not scruple to utter the words aloud.

I started up to make an indignant rejoinder; some fierce insult was on my lips; but passion and excitement and wine mastered me, and I sank back on my seat overcome and senseless.

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEXT MORNING.

I COULD not awake on the day after the *fête*. I was conscious that Nixon was making a considerable noise, — that he shut and opened doors and windows, splashed the water into my bath, and threw down my boots with an unwonted energy; but through all this consciousness of disturbance I slept on, and was determined to sleep, let him make what uproar he pleased.

"It's nigh two o'clock, sir!" whispered he in my ear, and I replied by a snort.

"I'm very sorry to be troublesome, sir; but the master is very impatient: he was getting angry when I went in last time."

These words served to dispel my drowsiness at once, and the mere thought of my father's displeasure acted on me like a strong stimulant.

"Does papa want me?" cried I, sitting up in bed; "did you say papa wanted me?"

"Yes, sir," said a deep voice; and my father entered the room, dressed for the street, and with his hat on.

"You may leave us," said he to Nixon; and as the man withdrew, my father took a chair and sat down close to my bedside.

"I have sent three messages to you this morning," said he, gravely, "and am forced at last to come myself."

I was beginning my apologies, when he stopped me, and said, "That will do; I have no wish to be told why you overslept yourself; indeed, I have already heard more on that score than I care for."

He paused, and though perhaps he expected me to say something, I was too much terrified to speak.

"I perceive," said he, "you understand me; you apprehend that I know of your doings of last night, and that any attempt at excuse is hopeless. I have not come here to reproach you for your misconduct; I reproach myself for a mistaken estimate of you; I ought to have known — and if you had been a horse I would have known — that your cross-breeding would tell on you. The bad drop was sure to betray itself. I will not dwell on this, nor have I time. Your conduct last night makes my continued residence here impossible. I cannot continue in a city where my tradespeople have become my guests, and where the honors of my house have been extended to my tailor and my butcher. I shall leave this, therefore, as soon as I can conclude my arrangements to sell this place: you must quit it at once. Eccles will be ready to start with you this evening for the Rhine, and then for the interior of Germany, — I suspect Weimar will do. He will be paymaster, and you will conform to his wishes strictly as regards expense. Whether you study or not, whether you employ your time profitably and creditably, or whether you pass it in indolence, is a matter that completely regards yourself. As for me, my conscience is acquitted when I provide you with the means of acquirement, and I no more engage you to benefit by these advantages than I do to see you eat the food that is placed before you. The compact that unites us enjoins distinct duties from each. You need not write to me till I desire you to do so; and when I think it proper we should meet, I will tell you."

If, while he spoke these harsh words to me, the slightest touch of feeling — had one trace of even sorrow crossed his face, my whole heart would have melted at once, and I would have thrown myself at his feet for forgiveness. There was, however, a something so pitiless in his tone, and a look so full of scorn in his steadfast eye, that every sentiment of pride within me — that same pride I inherited from himself — stimulated me to answer him, and I said boldly: "If the people I saw here last night were not as well born as your habitual guests, sir, I'll venture to say there was nothing in their manner or deportment to be ashamed of."

"I am told that Mademoiselle Pauline Delorme was charming," said he; and the sarcasm of his glance covered me with shame and confusion. He had no need to say more: I could not utter a word.

"This is a topic I will not discuss with you, sir," said he, after a pause. "I intended you to be a gentleman, and to live with gentlemen. *Your* tastes incline differently, and I make no opposition to them. As I have told you already, I was willing to launch you into life; I'll not engage to be your pilot. Any interest I take or could take in you must be the result of your own qualities. These have not impressed me strongly up to this; and were I to judge by what I have seen, I should send you back to those you came from."

"Do so, then, if it will only give me back the nature I brought away with me!" cried I, passionately; and my throat swelled till I felt almost choked with emotion.

"That nature," said he, with a sneer on the word, "was costumed, if I remember right, in a linen blouse and a pair of patched shoes; and I believe they have been preserved along with some other family relics."

I bethought me at once of the tower and its humble furniture, and a sense of terror overcame me, that I was in presence of one who could cherish hate with such persistence.

"The fumes of your last night's debauch are some excuse for your bad manners, sir," said he, rising. "I leave you to sleep them off; only remember that the train starts at eight this evening, and it is my desire you do not miss it."

With this he left me. I arose at once and began to dress. It was a slow proceeding, for I would often stop, and sit down to think what course would best befit me to take at this moment. At one instant it seemed to me I ought to follow him, and declare that the splendid slavery in which I lived had no charm for me, — that the faintest glimmering of self-respect and independence was more my ambition than all the luxuries that surrounded me; and when I had resolved I would do this, a sudden dread of his presence, — his eye that I could never face without shrinking, — the

tones of his voice that smote me like a lash, — so abashed me that I gave up the effort with despair.

Might he not consent to give me some pittance — enough to save her from the burden of my support — and send me back to my mother? Oh, if I could summon courage to ask this! This assistance need be continued only for a few years, for I hoped and believed I should not always have to live as a dependant. What if I were to write him a few lines to this purport? I could do this even better than speak it.

I sat down at once and began: —

"Dear papa," — he would never permit me to use a more endearing word. "Dear papa, I hope you will forgive me troubling you about myself and my future. I would like to fit myself for some career or calling by which I might become independent. I could work very hard and study very closely if I were back with my mother."

As I reached this far, the door opened, and Eccles appeared.

"All right!" cried he; "I was afraid I should catch you in bed still, and I'm glad you're up and preparing for the road. Are you nearly ready?"

"Not quite; I wanted to write a letter before I go. I was just at it."

"Write from Verviers or Bonn; you'll have lots of time on the road."

"Ay, but my letter might save me from the journey if I sent it off now."

He looked amazed at this, and I at once told him my plan and showed him what I had written.

"You don't mean to say you'd have courage to send this to your father?"

"And why not?"

"Well, all I have to say is, don't do it till I'm off the premises; for I'd not be here when he reads it for a trifle. My dear Digby," said he, with a changed tone, "you don't know Sir Roger; you don't know the violence of his temper if he imagines himself what he calls outraged, which sometimes means questioned. Take your hat and stick, and go seek your fortune, in Heaven's name, if you must; but

don't set out on your life's journey with a curse or a kick, or possibly both. If I preach patience, my dear boy, I have had to practise it too. Put up your traps in your portmanteau; come down and take some dinner: we'll start with the night-train; and take my word for it, we'll have a jolly ramble and enjoy ourselves heartily. If I know anything of life, it is that there's no such mistake in the world as hunting up annoyances. Let them find us if they can, but let us never run after them."

"My heart is too heavy for such enjoyment as you talk of."

"It won't be so to-morrow, or, at all events, the day after. Come, stir yourself now with your packing; a thought has just struck me that you'll be very grateful to me for, when I tell it you."

"What is it?" asked I, half carelessly.

"You must ask with another guess-look in your eye if you expect me to tell you."

"You could tell me nothing that would gladden me."

"Nor propose anything that you'd like?" asked he.

"Nor that, either," said I, despondingly.

"Oh, if that be the case, I give up my project; not that it was much of a project, after all. What I was going to suggest was that instead of dining here we should put our traps into a cab, and drive down to Delorme's and have a pleasant little dinner there, in the garden; it's quite close to the railroad, so that we could start at the last whistle."

"That does sound pleasantly," said I; "there's nothing more irksome in its way than hanging about a station waiting for departure."

"So, then, you agree?" cried he, with a malicious twinkle in his eye that I affected not to understand.

"Yes," said I, indolently; "I see little against it; and if nothing else, it saves me a leave-taking with Captain Hotham and Cleremont."

"By the way, you are not to ask to see Madame; your father reminded me to tell you this. The doctors say she is not to be disturbed on any account. What a chance that I did not forget this!"

Whether it was that I was too much concerned for my

own misfortunes to have a thought that was not selfish, or that another leave-taking that loomed in the distance was uppermost in my thoughts, certain it is, I felt this privation far less acutely than I might.

"She's a nice little woman, and deserves a better lot than she has met with."

"What sort of dinner will Delorme give us?" said I, affecting the air of a man about town, but in reality throwing out the bait to lead the talk in that direction.

"First-rate, if we let him; that is, if we only say, 'Order dinner for us, Monsieur Pierre.' There's no man understands such a mandate more thoroughly."

"Then that's what I shall say," cried I, "as I cross his threshold."

"He'll serve you Madeira with your soup, and Steinberger with your fish, thirty francs a bottle, each of them."

"Be it so. We shall drink to our pleasant journey," said I; and I actually thought my voice had caught the tone and cadence of my father's as I spoke.

CHAPTER XIV.

A GOOD-BYE.

WHILE I strolled into the garden to select a table for our dinner, Eccles went in search of Mr. Delorme; and though he had affected to say that the important duty of devising the feast should be confided to the host, I could plainly see that my respected tutor accepted his share in that high responsibility.

I will only say of the feast in question, that, though I was daily accustomed to the admirable dinners of my father's table, I had no conception of what exquisite devices in cookery could be produced by the skill of an accomplished restaurateur, left free to his own fancy, and without limitation as to the bill.

One thing alone detracted from the perfect enjoyment of the banquet. It was the appearance of Mr. Delorme himself, white-cravated and gloved, carrying in the soup. It was an attention that he usually reserved for great personages, royalties, or high dignitaries of the court; and I was shocked that he should have selected me for the honor, not the less as it was only a few hours before he and I had been drinking champagne with much clinking of glasses together, and interchanging the most affectionate vows of eternal friendship.

I arose from my chair to salute him; but, as he deposited the tureen upon the table, he stepped back and bowed low, and retreated in this fashion, with the same humble reverence at every step, till he was lost in the distance.

"Sit down," said Eccles, with a peculiar look, as though to warn me that I was forgetting my dignity; and then, to divert my attention, he added, "That green seal is an attention Delorme offers you, — a very rare favor, too, — a

bottle of his own peculiar Johannisberg. Let us drink his health. Now, Digby, I call this something very high perfection."

It was a theme my tutor understood thoroughly, and there was not a dish nor a wine that he did not criticise.

"I was always begging your father to take this cook, Digby," said he, with a half sigh. "Even with a first-rate artist you need change, otherwise your dinners become manneristic, as ours have become of late."

He then went on to show me that the domestic cook, always appealing to the small public of the family, gets narrowed in his views and bounded in his resources. He compared them, I remember, to the writers in certain religious newspapers, who must always go on spicing higher and higher as the palates of their clients grow more jaded. How he worked out his theme afterwards I cannot tell, for I was watching the windows of the house, and stealing glances down the alleys in the garden, longing for one look, ever so fleeting, of my lovely partner of the night before.

"I see, young gentleman," said he, evidently nettled at my inattention, "your thoughts are not with me."

"How long have we to stay, sir?" said I, reverting to the respect I tendered him at my lessons.

"You have thirty-eight minutes," said he, examining his watch: "which I purpose to apportion in this wise, — eight for the *douceur*, five for the cheese, fifteen for the dessert, five for coffee and a glass of *curaçoa*. The bill and our parting compliments will take the rest, giving us three minutes to walk across to the station."

These sort of pedantries were a passion with him, and I did not interpose a word as he spoke.

"What a pineapple!" cried a young fellow from an adjoining table, as a waiter deposited a magnificent pine in the midst of the bouquet that adorned our table.

"Monsieur Delorme begs to say, sir, this has just arrived from Laeken."

"Don't you know who that is?" said a companion, in a low voice; but my hearing, ever acute, caught the words. "He's that boy of Norcott's."

I started as if I had received a blow. It was time to resent these insolences, and make an end of them forever.

"You heard what that man yonder has called me?" said I to Eccles.

"No; I was not minding him."

"The old impertinence, — 'That boy of Norcott's.'"

I arose, and took the cane I had laid against a chair. What I was about to do I knew not. I felt I should launch some insolent provocation. As for what should follow, the event might decide *that*.

"I'd not mind him, Digby," said Eccles, carelessly, as he lit his cigarette, and stretched his legs on a vacant chair. I took no notice of his words, but walked on. Before, however, I had made three steps my eyes caught the flutter of a dress at the end of the alley. It was merely the last folds of some floating muslin, but it was enough to rout all other thoughts from my head, and I flew down the walk with lightning speed. I was right; it was Pauline. In an instant I was beside her.

"Dearest, darling Pauline," I cried, seizing her round the waist and kissing her cheek, before she well knew, "how happy it makes me to see you even for a few seconds."

"Ah, milord, I did not expect to see you here," said she, half distantly.

"I am not milord; I am your own Digby — Digby Norcott, who loves you, and will make you his wife."

"Ma foi! children don't marry, — at least demoiselles don't marry them," said she, with a saucy laugh.

"I am no more an 'enfant,'" said I, with a passionate stress on the word, "than I was last night, when you never left my arm except to sit at my side at supper."

"But you are going away," said she, pouting; "else why that travelling-dress, and that sack strapped at your side?"

"Only for a few weeks. A short tour up the Rhine, Pauline, to see the world, and complete my education; and then I will come back and marry you, and you shall be mistress of a beautiful house, and have everything you can think of."

"Vrai?" asked she, with a little laugh.

"I swear it by this kiss."

"Pardie, Monsieur! you are very adventurous," said she, repulsing me; "you will make me not regret that you are going so soon."

"Oh, Pauline! when you know that I adore you, that I only value wealth to share it with you; that all I ask of life is to devote it to you."

"And that you haven't got full thirty seconds left for that admirable object," broke in Eccles. "We must run for it like fury, boy, or we shall be late."

"I'll not go."

"Then I'll be shot if I stay here and meet your father," said he, turning away.

"Oh, Pauline, dearest, dearest of my heart!" I sobbed out, as I fell upon her neck; and the vile bell of the railway rang out with its infernal discord as I clasped her to my heart.

"Come along, and confound you," cried Eccles; and with a porter on one side and Eccles on the other, I was hurried along down the garden, across a road, and along a platform, where the station-master, wild with passion, stamped and swore in a very different mood from that in which he smiled at me across the supper-table the night before.

"We're waiting for that boy of Norcott's, I vow," said an old fellow with a gray moustache; and I marked him out for future recognition.

Unlike my first journey, where all seemed confusion, trouble, and annoyance, I now saw only pleasant faces, and people bent on enjoyment. We were on the great tourist road of Europe, and it seemed as though every one was bound on some errand of amusement. Eccles, too, was a pleasant contrast to the courier who took charge of me on my first journey. Nothing could be more genial than his manner. He treated me with a perfect equality, and by that greatest of all flatteries to one of my age, induced me to believe that I was actually companionable to himself.

I will not pretend that he was an instructive companion.

He had neither knowledge of history nor feeling for art, and rather amused himself with sneering at both, and quizzing such of our fellow-travellers as the practice was safe with. But he was always gay, always in excellent spirits, ready to make light of the passing annoyances of the road, and, as he said himself, he always carried a quart-bottle of condensed sunshine with him against a rainy day; and, of my own knowledge, I can say his supply seemed inexhaustible.

His cheery manner, his bright good looks, and his invariable good-humor won upon every one, and the sourest and least genial people thawed into some show of warmth under his contagious pleasantry.

He did not care in what direction we went, and would have left it entirely to me to decide, had I been able to determine. All he stipulated for was: "No barbarism, no Oberland or glacier humbug. No Saxon Switzerland abominations. So long as we travel in a crowd, and meet good cookery every day, you'll find me charming."

Into this philosophy he inducted me. "Make life pleasant, Digby; never go in search of annoyances. Duns and disagreeables will come of themselves, and it's no bad fun dodging them. It's only a fool ever keeps their company."

A more shameless immorality might have revolted me, but this peddling sort of wickedness, this half-jesting with right and wrong, — giving to morals the aspect of a game in which a certain kind of address was practicable, — was very seductive to one of my age and temper. I fancied, too, that I was becoming a consummate man of the world, and his praises of my proficiency were unsparingly bestowed.

Attaching ourselves to this or that party of travellers, we would go off here or there, in any direction, for four or five days; and though I usually found myself growing fond of those I became more intimate with, and sorry to part from them, Eccles invariably wearied of the pleasantest people after a day or two. Incessant change seemed essential to him, and his nature and his spirits flagged when denied it.

What I least liked about him, however, was a habit he had of "trotting" me out — his own name for it — before

strangers. My knowledge of languages, my skill at games, my little musical talents, he would parade in a way that I found positively offensive. Nor was this all, for I found he represented me as the son of a man of immense wealth and of a rank commensurate with his fortune.

One must have gone through the ordeal of such a representation to understand its vexations, to know all the imperinences it can evoke from some, all the slavish attentions from others. I feel a hot flush of shame on my cheek now, after long years, as I think of the mortifications I went through, as Eccles would suggest that I should buy some princely chateau that we saw in passing, or some lordly park alongside of which our road was lying.

As to remonstrating with him on this score, or, indeed, on any other, it was utterly hopeless; not to say that it was just as likely he would amuse the first group of travellers we met by a ludicrous version of my attempt to coerce him into good behavior.

One day he pushed my patience beyond all limit, and I grew downright angry with him. I had been indulging in that harmless sort of half-flirtation with a young lady, a fellow-traveller; which, not transgressing the bounds of small attentions, does not even excite remark or rebuke.

"Don't listen to that young gentleman's blandishments," said he, laughing; "for, young as he looks, he is already engaged. Come, come, don't look as though you'd strike me, Digby, but deny it if you can."

We were, fortunately for me, coming into a station as he spoke. I sprang out, and travelled third-class the rest of the day to avoid him, and when we met at night, I declared that with one such liberty more I'd part company with him forever.

The hearty good-humor with which he assured me I should not be offended again almost made me ashamed of my complaint. We shook hands over our reconciliation, and vowed we were better friends than ever.

What it cost him to abandon this habit of exalting me before strangers, how nearly it touched one of the chief pleasures of his life, I was, as I thought, soon to see in the altered tone of his manner. In fact, it totally destroyed

the easy flippancy he used to wield, and a facility with strangers that once seemed like a special gift with him. I tried in vain to rally him out of this half depression; but it was clear he was not a man of many resources, and that I had already sapped a principal one.

While we thus journeyed, he said to me one day, "I find, Digby, our money is running short; we must make for Zurich: it is the nearest of the places on our letter of credit."

I assented, of course, and we bade adieu to a pleasant family with whom we had been travelling, and who were bound for Dresden, assuring them we should meet them on the Elbe.

Eccles had grown of late more and more serious: not alone had his gayety deserted him, but he grew absent and forgetful to an absurd extent; and it was evident some great preoccupation had hold of him. During the entire of the last day before we reached Zurich he scarcely spoke a word, and as I saw that he had received some letters at Schaffhausen, I attributed his gloom to their tidings. As he had not spoken to me of bad news, I felt ashamed to obtrude myself on his confidence and kept silent, and not a word passed between us as we went. He had telegraphed to the banker, a certain Mr. Heinfetter, to order rooms for us at the hotel; and as we alighted at the door, the gentleman himself was there to meet us.

"Herr Eccles?" said he, eagerly, lifting his hat as we descended; and Eccles moved towards him, and, taking his arm, walked away to some distance, leaving me alone and unnoticed. For several minutes they appeared in closest confab, their heads bent close together, and at last I saw Eccles shake himself free from the other's arm, and throw up both his hands in the air with a gesture of wild despair. I began to suspect some disaster had befallen our remittances, that they were lost or suppressed, and that Eccles was overwhelmed by the misfortune. I own I could not participate in the full measure of the misery it seemed to cause him, and I lighted a cigar and sat down on a stone bench to wait patiently his return.

"I believe you are right; it is the best way, after all,"

said Eccles, hurriedly. "You say you'll look after the boy, and I'll start by the ten o'clock train."

"Yes, I'll take the boy," said the other; "but you'll have to look sharp and lose no time. They will be sequestering the moment they hear of it, and I half suspect old Engler will be before you."

"But my personal effects? I have things of value."

"Hush, hush! he'll overhear you. Come, young gentleman," said he to me, — "come home and sup with me. The hotel is so full, they've no quarters for you. I'll try if I can't put you up."

Eccles stood with his head bent down as we moved away, then lifted his eyes, waved his hand a couple of times, and said, "By-bye."

"Is n't he coming with us?" asked I.

"Not just yet: he has some business to detain him," said the banker; and we moved on.

CHAPTER XV.

A TERRIBLE SHOCK.

HERR HEINFETTER was a bachelor, and lived in a very modest fashion over his banking-house; and as he was employed from morning to night, I saw next to nothing of him. Eccles, he said, had been called away, and though I eagerly asked where, by whom, and for how long, I got no other answer than "He is called away," in very German English, and with a stolidity of look fully as Teutonic.

The banker was not talkative: he smoked all the evening, and drank beer, and except an occasional monosyllabic comment on its excellence, said little.

"Ach, ja!" he would say, looking at me fixedly, as though assenting to some not exactly satisfactory conclusion his mind had come to about me, — "ach, ja!" And I would have given a good deal at the time to know to what peculiar feature of my fortune or my fate this half-compassionate exclamation extended.

"Is Eccles never coming back?" cried I, one day, as the post came in, and no tidings of him appeared; "is he never coming at all?"

"Never, no more."

"Not coming back?" cried I.

"No; not come back no more."

"Then what am I staying here for? Why do I wait for him?"

"Because you have no money to go elsewhere," said he; and for once he gave way to something he thought was a laugh.

"I don't understand you, Herr Heinfetter," said I; "our letter of credit, Mr. Eccles told me, was on your house here. Is it exhausted, and must I wait for a remittance?"

"It is exhaust; Mr. Eccles exhaust it."

"So that I must write for money; is that so?"

"You may write and write, mien lieber, but it won't come."

Herr Heinfetter drained his tall glass, and, leaning his arms on the table, said: "I will tell you in German, you know it well enough." And forthwith he began a story, which lost nothing of the pain and misery it caused me by the unsympathizing tone and stolid look of the narrator. For my reader's sake, as for my own, I will condense it into the fewest words I can, and omit all that Herr Heinfetter inserted either as comment or censure. My father had eloped with Madame Cleremont! They had fled to Innsprück, from which my father returned to the neighborhood of Belgium, to offer Cleremont a meeting. Cleremont, however, possessed in his hands a reparation he liked better, — my father's check-book, with a number of signed but unfilled checks. These he at once filled up to the last shilling of his credit, and drew out the money, so that my father's first draft on London was returned dishonored. The villa and all its splendid contents were sequestered, and an action for divorce, with ten thousand pounds laid as damages, already commenced. Of three thousand francs, which our letter assured us at Zurich, Eccles had drawn two thousand: he would have taken all, but Heinfetter, who prudently foresaw I must be got rid of some day, retained one thousand to pay my way. Eccles had gone, promising to return when he had saved his own effects, or what he called his own, from the wreck; but a few lines had come from him to say the smash was complete, the "huissiers" in possession, seals on everything, and "not even the horses watered without a gendarme present in full uniform."

"Tell Digby, if we travel together again, he'll not have to complain of my puffing him off for a man of fortune; and, above all, advise him to avoid Brussels in his journeyings. He'll find his father's creditors, I'm afraid, far more attached to him than Mademoiselle Pauline."

His letter wound up with a complaint over his own blighted prospects, for, of course, his chance of the presentation was now next to hopeless, and he did not know what line of life he might be driven to.

And now, shall I own that, ruined and deserted as I was, overwhelmed with sorrow and shame, there was no part of all the misery I felt more bitterly than the fate of her who had been so kindly affectionate to me, — who had nursed me so tenderly in sickness, and been the charming companion of my happiest hours? At first it seemed incredible. My father's manner to her had ever been coldness itself, and I could only lead myself to believe the story by imagining how the continued cruelty of Cleremont had actually driven the unhappy woman to entreat protection against his barbarity. It was as well I should think so, and it served to soften the grief and assuage the intensity of the sorrow the event caused me. I cried over it two entire days and part of a third; and so engrossed was I with this affliction that not a thought of myself, or of my own destitution, ever crossed me.

"Do you know where my father is?" asked I of the banker.

"Yes," said he, dryly.

"May I have his address? I wish to write to him."

"This is what he send for message," said he, producing a telegram, the address of which he had carefully torn off.

"It is of you he speak: 'Do what you like with him except bother me. Let him have whatever money is in your hands to my credit, and let him understand he has no more to expect from Roger Norcott.'"

"May I keep this paper, sir?" asked I, in a humble tone.

"I see no reason against it. Yes," muttered he. "As to the moneys, Eccles have drawn eighty pound; there is forty remain to you."

I sat down and covered my face with my hands. It was a habit with me when I wanted to apply myself fully to thought; but Herr Heinfetter suspected that I had given way to grief, and began to cheer me up. I at once undeceived him, and said, "No, I was not crying, sir; I was only thinking what I had best do. If you allow me, I will go up to my room, and think it over by myself. I shall be calmer, even if I hit on nothing profitable."

I passed twelve hours alone, occasionally dropping off to sleep out of sheer weariness, for my brain worked hard.

travelling over a wide space, and taking in every contingency and every accident I could think of. I might go back and seek out my mother; but to what end, if I should only become a dependant on her? No; far better that I should try and obtain some means of earning a livelihood, ever so humble, abroad, than spread the disgrace of my family at home. Perhaps Herr Heinfetter might accept my services in some shape; I could be anything but a servant.

When I told him I wished to earn my bread, he looked doubtfully at me in silence, shaking his head, and muttering, "Nein, niemals, nein," in every cadence of despair.

"Could you not try me, sir?" pleaded I, earnestly; but his head moved sadly in refusal.

"I will think of it," he said at last, and he left me.

He was as good as his word; he thought of it for two whole days, and then said that he had a correspondent on the shore of the Adriatic, in a little-visited town, where no news of my father's history was like to reach, and that he would write to him to take me into his counting-house in some capacity: a clerk, or possibly a messenger, till I should prove myself worthy of being advanced to the desk. It would be hard work, however, he said; Herr Oppovich was a Slavic, and they were people who gave themselves few indulgences, and their dependants still fewer.

He went on to tell me that the house of Hodnig and Oppovich had been a wealthy firm formerly, but that Hodnig had over-s Speculated, and died of a broken heart; that now, after years of patient toil and thrift, Oppovich had restored the credit of the house, and was in good repute in the world of trade. Some time back he had written to Heinfetter to send him a young fellow who knew languages and was willing to work.

"That's all," he said; "shall I venture to tell him that I recommend you for these?"

"Let me have a trial," said I, gravely.

"I will write your letter to-night, then, and you shall set out to-morrow for Vienna; thence you'll take the rail to Trieste, and by sea you'll reach Fiume, where Herr Oppovich lives."

I thanked him heartily, and went to my room.

On the morning that followed began my new life. I was no longer to be the pampered and spoiled child of fortune, surrounded with every appliance of luxury, and waited on by obsequious servants. I was now to travel modestly, to fare humbly, and to ponder over the smallest outlay, lest it should limit me in some other quarter of greater need. But of all the changes in my condition, none struck me so painfully at first as the loss of consideration from strangers that immediately followed my fallen state. People who had no concern with my well-to-do condition, who could take no possible interest in my prosperity, had been courteous to me hitherto, simply because I was prosperous, and were now become something almost the reverse for no other reason, that I could see, than that I was poor.

Where before I had met willingness to make my acquaintance, and an almost cordial acceptance, I was now to find distance and reserve. Above all, I discovered that there was a general distrust of the poor man, as though he were one more especially exposed to rash influences, and more likely to yield to them.

I got some sharp lessons in these things the first few days of my journey, but I dropped down at last into the third-class train, and found myself at ease. My fellow-travellers were not very polished or very cultivated, but in one respect their good breeding had the superiority over that of finer folk. They never questioned my right to be saving, nor seemed to think the worse of me for being poor.

Herr Heinfetter had counselled me to stay a few days at Vienna, and provide myself with clothes more suitable to my new condition than those I was wearing.

"If old Ignaz Oppovich saw a silk-lined coat, he'd soon send you about your business," said he; "and as to that fine watch-chain and its gay trinkets, you have only to appear with it once to get your dismissal."

It was not easy, with my little experience of life, to see how these things should enter into an estimate of me, or why Herr Ignaz should concern him with other attributes of mine than such as touched my clerkship; but as I was entering on a world where all was new, where not only the people, but their prejudices and their likings, were all

strange to me, I resolved to approach them in an honest spirit, and with a desire to conform to them as well as I was able.

Lest the name Norcott appearing in the newspapers in my father's case should connect me with his story, Hein-fetter advised me to call myself after my mother's family, which sounded, besides, less highly born; and I had my passport made out in the name of Digby Owen.

"Mind, lad," said the banker, as he parted with me, "give yourself no airs with Ignaz Oppovich; do not turn up your nose at his homely fare, or handle his coarse napkin as if it hurt your skin, as I have seen you do here. From his door to destitution there is only a step, and bethink yourself twice before you take it. I have done all I mean to do by you, more than I shall ever be paid for. And now, good-bye."

This sort of language grated very harshly on my ears at first; but I had resolved to bear my lot courageously, and conform, where I could, to the tone of those I had come down to.

I thanked him, then, respectfully and calmly, for his hospitality to me, and went my way.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIUME.

"I saw a young fellow, so like that boy of Norcott's in a third-class carriage," I overheard a traveller say to his companion, as we stopped to sup at Gratz.

"He'll have scarcely come to that, I fancy," said the other, "though Norcott must have run through nearly everything by this time."

It was about the last time I was to hear myself called in this fashion. They who were to know me thenceforward were to know me by another name, and in a rank that had no traditions; and I own I accepted this humble fortune with a more contented spirit and with less chagrin than it cost me to hear myself spoken of in this half-contemptuous fashion.

I was now very plainly, simply dressed. I made no display of studs or watch-chain; I even gave up the ring I used to wear, and took care that my gloves — in which I once was almost puppyish — should be the commonest and the cheapest.

If there was something that at moments fell very heavily on my heart in the utter destitution of my lot, there was, on the other hand, what nerved my heart and stimulated me in the thought that there was some heroism in what I was doing. I was, so to say, about to seek my fortune; and what to a young mind could be more full of interest and anticipation than such a thought? To be entirely self-dependent; to be thrown into situations of difficulty, with nothing but one's own resources to rely on; to be obliged to trust to one's head for counsel, and one's heart for courage; to see oneself, as it were, alone against the world, — is intensely exciting.

In the days of romance there were personal perils to confront, and appalling dangers to be surmounted; but now it was a game of life, to be played, not merely with a stout heart and a ready hand, but with a cool head and a steady eye. Young as I was, I had seen a great deal. In that strange comedy of which my father's guests were the performers, there was great insight into character to be gained, and a marvellous knowledge of that skill by which they who live by their wits cultivate these same wits to live.

If I was not totally corrupted by the habits and ways of that life, I owe it wholly to those teachings of my dear mother which, through all the turmoil and confusion of this ill-regulated existence, still held a place in my heart, and led me again and again to ask myself how *she* would think of this, or what judgment she would pass on that; and even in this remnant of a conscience there was some safety. I tried to persuade myself that it was well for me that all this was now over, and that an honest existence was now about to open to me, — an existence in which my good mother's lessons would avail me more, stimulate me to the right and save me from the wrong, and give to the humblest cares of daily labor a halo that had never shone on my life of splendor.

It was late at night when I reached Trieste, and I left it at daybreak. The small steamer in which I had taken my passage followed the coast line, calling at even the most insignificant little towns and villages, and winding its track through that myriad of islands which lie scattered along this strange shore. The quiet, old-world look of these quaint towns, the simple articles they dealt in, the strange dress, and the stranger sounds of the language of these people, all told me into what a new life I had just set foot, and how essential it was to leave all my former habits behind me as I entered here.

The sun had just gone below the sea, as we rounded the great promontory of the north and entered the bay of Fiume. Scarcely had we passed in than the channel seemed to close behind us, and we were moving along over what looked like a magnificent lake bounded on every side by lofty moun-

tains, — for the islands of the bay are so placed that they conceal the openings to the Adriatic. If the base of the great mountains was steeped in a blue, deep and mellow as the sea itself, their summits glowed in the carbuncle tints of the setting sun, and over these again long lines of cloud, golden and azure streaks marked the sky, almost on fire, as it were, with the last parting salute of the glorious orb that was setting. It was not merely that I had never seen, but I could not have imagined such beauty of landscape, and as we swept quietly along nearer the shore, and I could mark the villas shrouded in the deep woods of chestnut and oak, and saw the olive and the cactus, with the orange and the oleander, bending their leafy branches over the blue water, I thought to myself, would not a life there be nearer Paradise than anything wealth and fortune could buy elsewhere?

"There, yonder," said the captain, pointing to the ornamented chimneys of a house surrounded by a deep oak-wood, and the terrace of which overhung the sea, "that's the villa of old Ignaz Oppovich. They say the Emperor tempted him with half a million of florins to sell it, but, miser as he was and is, the old fellow refused it."

"Is that Oppovich of the firm of Hodnig and Oppovich?" asked I.

"Yes; the house is all Oppovich's now, and half Fiume too, I believe."

"There are worse fellows than old Ignaz," said another, gravely. "I wonder what would become of the hospital, or the poor-house, or the asylum for the orphans here, but for him."

"He's a Jew," said another, spitting out with contempt.

"A Jew that could teach many a Christian the virtues of his own faith," cried the former. "A Jew that never refused an alms to the poor, no matter of what belief, and that never spoke ill of his neighbor."

"I never heard as much good of him before, and I have been a member of the town council with him these thirty years."

The other touched his hat respectfully in recognition of the speaker's rank, and said no more.

I took my little portmanteau in my hand as we landed,

and made for a small hotel which faced the sea. I had determined not to present myself to the Herr Oppovich till morning, and to take that evening to see the town and its neighborhood.

As I strolled about, gazing with a stranger's curiosity at all that was new and odd to me in this quiet spot, I felt coming over me that deep depression which almost invariably falls upon him who, alone and friendless, makes first acquaintance with the scene wherein he is to live. How hard it is for him to believe that the objects he sees can ever become of interest to him; how impossible it seems that he will live to look on this as home; that he will walk that narrow street as a familiar spot; giving back the kindly greetings that he gets, and feeling that strange, mysterious sense of brotherhood that grows out of daily intercourse with the same people!

I was curious to see where the Herr Oppovich lived, and found the place after some search. The public garden of the town, a prettily planted spot, lies between two mountain streams, flanked by tall mountains, and is rather shunned by the inhabitants from its suspicion of damp. Through this deserted spot — for I saw not one being as I went — I passed on to a dark copse at the extreme end, and beyond which a small wooden bridge led over to a garden wildly overgrown with evergreens and shrubs, and so neglected that it was not easy at first to select the right path amongst the many that led through the tangled brushwood. Following one of these, I came out on a little lawn in front of a long low house of two stories. The roof was high-pitched, and the windows narrow and defended by strong iron shutters, which lay open on the outside wall, displaying many a bolt and bar, indicative of strength and resistance. No smoke issued from a chimney, not a sound broke the stillness, nor was there a trace of any living thing around, — desolation like it I had never seen. At last, a mean, half-starved dog crept coweringly across the lawn, and, drawing nigh the door, stood and whined plaintively. After a brief pause the door opened, the animal stole in; the door then closed with a bang, and all was still as before. I turned back towards the town with a heavy heart; a gloomy dread

of those I was to be associated with on the morrow was over me, and I went to the inn and locked myself into my room, and fell upon my bed with a sense of desolation that found vent at last in a torrent of tears.

As I look back on the night that followed, it seems to me one of the saddest passages of my life. If I fell asleep, it was to dream of the past, with all its exciting pleasures and delights, and then, awaking suddenly, I found myself in this wretched, poverty-stricken room, where every object spoke of misery, and recalled me to the thought of a condition as ignoble and as lowly.

I remember well how I longed for day-dawn, that I might get up and wander along the shore, and taste the fresh breeze, and hear the splash of the sea, and seek in that greater, wider, and more beautiful world of nature a peace that my own despairing thoughts would not suffer me to enjoy. And, at the first gleam of light, I did steal down, and issue forth, to walk for hours along the bay in a sort of enchantment from the beauty of the scene, that filled me at last with a sense of almost happiness. I thought of Pauline, too, and wondered would *she* partake of the delight this lovely spot imparted to *me*? Would *she* see these leafy woods, that bold mountain, that crystal sea, with its glittering sands many a fathom deep, as I saw them? And if so, what a stimulus to labor and grow rich was in the thought.

In pleasant reveries, that dashed the future with much that had delighted me in the past, the hours rolled on till it was time to present myself at Herr Oppovich's. Armed with my letter of introduction, I soon found myself at the door of a large warehouse, over which his name stood in big letters. A narrow wooden stair ascended steeply from the entrance to a long low room, in which fully twenty clerks were busily engaged at their desks. At the end of this, in a smaller room, I was told Herr Ignaz — for he was always so called — held his private office.

Before I was well conscious of it, I was standing in this room before a short, thick-set old man, with heavy eyebrows and beard, and whose long coat of coarse cloth reached to his feet.

He sat and examined me as he read the note, pausing at

times in the reading as if to compare me with the indications before him.

"Digby Owen, — is that the name?" asked he.

"Yes, sir."

"Native of Ireland, and never before employed in commercial pursuits?"

I nodded to this interrogatory.

"I am not in love with Ireland, nor do I feel a great liking for ignorance, Herr Owen," said he, slowly; and there was a deep impressiveness in his tone, though the words came with the thick accentuation of the Jew. "My old friend and correspondent should have remembered these prejudices of mine. Herr Jacob Heinfetter should not have sent you here."

I knew not what reply to make to this, and was silent.

"He should not have sent you here;" and he repeated the words with increased solemnity. "What do you want me to do with you?" said he, sharply, after a brief pause.

"Anything that will serve to let me earn my bread," said I, calmly.

"But I can get scores like you, young man, for the wages we give servants here; and would you be content with that?"

"I must take what you are pleased to give me."

He rang a little bell beside him, and cried out, "Send Harasch here." And, at the word, a short, beetle-browed, ill-favored young fellow appeared at the door, pen in hand.

"Bring me your ledger," said the old man. "Look here now," said he to me, as he turned over the beautifully clean and neatly kept volume: "this is the work of one who earns six hundred florins a year. You began with four, Harasch?"

"Three hundred, Herr Ignaz," said the lad, bowing.

"Can you live and wear such clothes as these," said the old man, touching my tweed coat, "for three hundred florins a year, — paper florins, mind, which in your money would make about twenty-five pounds?"

"I will do my best with it," said I, determined he should not deter me by mere words.

"Take him with you, Harasch; let him copy into the

waste-book. We shall see in a few days what he's fit for."

At a sign from the youth I followed him out, and soon found myself in the outer room, where a considerable number of the younger clerks were waiting to acknowledge me.

Nothing could well be less like the manners and habits I was used to than the coarse familiarity and easy impertinence of these young fellows. They questioned me about my birth, my education, my means, what circumstance had driven me to my present step, and why none of my friends had done anything to save me from it. Not content with a number of very searching inquiries, they began to assure me that Herr Ignaz would not put up with my incapacity for a week. "He'll send you into the yard," cried one; and the sentence was chorused at once. "Ja! ja! he'll be sent into the yard." And though I was dying to know what that might mean, my pride restrained my curiosity, and I would not condescend to ask.

"Won't he be fine in the yard!" I heard one whisper to another, and they both began laughing at the conceit; and I now sat down on a bench and lost myself in thought.

"Come; we are going to dinner, Engländer," said Harasch to me at last; and I arose and followed him.

CHAPTER XVII.

HANSERL OF THE YARD.

I WAS soon to learn what being "sent into the yard" meant. Within a week that destiny was mine. Being so sent was the phrase for being charged to count the staves as they arrived in wagon-loads from Hungary, — oaken staves being the chief "industry" of Fiume, and the principal source of Herr Oppovich's fortune.

My companion, and, indeed, my instructor in this intellectual employment, was a strange-looking, dwarfish creature, who, whatever the season, wore a suit of dark yellow leather, the jerkin being fastened round the waist by a broad belt with a heavy brass buckle. He had been in the yard three-and-forty years, and though his assistants had been uniformly promoted to the office, he had met no advancement in life, but was still in the same walk and the same grade in which he had started.

Hans Spöner was, however, a philosopher, and went on his road uncomplainingly. He said that the open air and the freedom were better than the closeness and confinement within-doors, and if his pay was smaller, his healthier appetite made him able to relish plainer food; and this mode of reconciling things — striking the balance between good and ill — went through all he said or did, and his favorite phrase, "Es ist fast einerley," or "It comes to about the same," comprised his whole system of worldly knowledge.

If at first I felt the occupation assigned to me as an insult and a degradation, Hanserl's companionship soon reconciled me to submit to it with patience. It was not merely that he displayed an invariable good-humor and pleasantry, but there was a forbearance about him, and a delicacy in his dealing with me, actually gentlemanlike. Thus, he never

questioned me as to my former condition, nor asked by what accident I had fallen to my present lot; and, while showing in many ways that he saw I was unused to hardship, he rather treated my inexperience as a mere fortuitous circumstance than as a thing to comment or dwell on. Hanserl, besides this, taught me how to live on my humble pay of a florin and ten kreutzers — about two shillings — daily. I had a small room that led out into the yard, and could consequently devote my modest salary to my maintenance. The straitened economy of Hans himself had enabled him to lay by about eight hundred florins, and he strongly advised me to arrange my mode of life on a plan that would admit of such a prudent saving.

Less for this purpose than to give my friend a strong proof of the full confidence I reposed in his judgment and his honor, I confided to his care all my earnings, and only begged he would provide for me as for himself; and thus Hans and I became inseparable. We took our coffee together at daybreak, our little soup and boiled beef at noon, and our potato-salad, with perhaps a sardine or such like, at night for supper; the "Viertelwein" — the fourth of a bottle — being equitably divided between us to cheer our hearts and cement good-fellowship on certainly as acrid a liquor as ever served two such excellent ends.

None of the clerks would condescend to know us. Herr Fripper, the cashier, would nod to us in the street, but the younger men never recognized us at all, save in some expansive moment of freedom by a wink or a jerk of the head. We were in a most subordinate condition, and they made us feel it.

From Hans I learned that Herr Oppovich was a widower with two children, a son and a daughter. The former was an irreclaimable scamp and vagabond, whose debts had been paid over and over again, and who had been turned out of the army with disgrace, and was now wandering about Europe, living on his father's friends, and trading for small loans on his family name. This was Adolph Oppovich. The girl — Sara she was called — was, in Hanserl's judgment, not much more to be liked than her brother. She was proud and insolent to a degree that would have been

remarkable in a princess of a reigning house. From the clerks she exacted a homage that was positively absurd. It was not alone that they should always stand uncovered as she passed, but that if any had occasion to address her he should prelude what he had to say by kissing her hand, an act of vassalage that in Austria is limited to persons of the humblest kind.

"She regards me as a wild beast, and I am therefore spared this piece of servitude," said Hans; and he laughed his noiseless uncouth laugh as he thought of his immunity.

"Is she handsome?" asked I.

"How can she be handsome when she is so overbearing?" said he. "Is not beauty gentleness, mildness, softness? How can it agree with eyes that flash disdain, and a mouth that seems to curl with insolence? The old proverb says, 'Schönheit ist Sanftheit;' and that's why Our Lady is always so lovely."

Hanserl was a devout Catholic; and not impossibly this sentiment made his judgment of the young Jewess all the more severe. Of Herr Oppovich himself he would say little. Perhaps he deemed it was not loyal to discuss him whose bread he ate; perhaps he had not sufficient experience of me to trust me with his opinion; at all events, he went no further than an admission that he was wise and keen in business, — one who made few mistakes himself, nor forgave them easily in another.

"Never do more than he tells you to do, younker," said Hans to me one day; "and he'll trust you, if you do that well." And this was not the least valuable hint he gave me.

Hans had a great deal of small worldly wisdom, the fruit rather of a long experience than of any remarkable gift of observation. As he said himself, it took him four years to learn the business of the yard; and as I acquired the knowledge in about a week, he regarded me as a perfect genius.

We soon became fast and firm friends. The way in which I had surrendered myself to his guidance — giving him up the management of my money, and actually submitting to his authority as though I were his son — had won upon the old man immensely; while I, on my side, — friendless and companionless, save with himself, — drew

close to the only one who seemed to take an interest in me. At first, — I must own it, — as we wended our way at noon towards the little eating-house where we dined, and I saw the friends with whom Hans exchanged greetings, and felt the class and condition he belonged to reflected in the coarse looks and coarser ways of his associates, I was ashamed to think to what I had fallen. I had, indeed, no respect nor any liking for the young fellows of the counting-house. They were intensely, offensively vulgar; but they had the outward semblance, the dress, and the gait of their betters, and they were privileged by appearance to stroll into a *café* and sit down, from which I and my companion would speedily have been ejected. I confess I envied them that mere right of admission into the well-dressed world, and sorrowed over my own exclusion as though it had been inflicted on me as a punishment.

This jealous feeling met no encouragement from Hans. The old man had no rancour of any kind in his nature. He had no sense of discontent with his condition, nor any desire to change it. Counting staves seemed to him a very fitting way to occupy existence; and he knew of many occupations that were less pleasant and less wholesome. Rags, for instance, for the paper-mill, or hides, in both of which Herr Ignaz dealt, Hans would have seriously disliked; but staves were cleanly, and smelt fresh and sweetly of the oak-wood they came from; and there was something noble in their destiny — to form casks and hogsheads for the rich wines of France and Spain — which he was fond of recalling; and so would he say, “Without you and me, boy, or those like us, they’d have no vats nor barrels for the red grape-juice.”

While he thus talked to me, trying to invest our humble calling with what might elevate it in my eyes, I struggled often with myself whether I should not tell him the story of my life, — in what rank I had lived, to what hopes of fortune I had been reared. Would this knowledge have raised me in the old man’s esteem, or would it have estranged him from me? that was the question. How should I come through the ordeal of his judgment, — higher or lower? A mere chance decided for me what all my pondering could

not resolve. Hans came home one night with a little book in his hand, a present for me. It was a French grammar, and, as he told me, the key to all knowledge.

"The French are the great people of the world," said he, "and till you know their tongue, you can have no real insight into learning." There was a "younker," once under him in the yard, who, just because he could read and write French, was now a cashier, with six hundred florins' salary. "When you have worked hard for three months, we'll look out for a master, Owen."

"But I know it already, Hanserl," said I, proudly. "I speak it even better than I speak German, and Italian too! Ay, stare at me, but it's true. I had masters for these, and for Greek and Latin; and I was taught to draw, and to sing, and to play the piano, and I learned how to ride and to dance."

"Just like a born gentleman," broke in Hans.

"I was, and I am, a born gentleman; don't shake your head, or wring your hands, Hanserl. I'm not going mad! These are not ravings! I'll soon convince you what I say is true." And I hurried to my room, and, opening my trunk, took out my watch and some trinkets, some studs of value, and a costly chain my father gave me. "These are all mine! I used to wear them once, as commonly as I now wear these bone buttons. There were more servants in my father's house than there are clerks in Herr Oppovich's counting-house. Let me tell you who I was, and how I came to be what I am."

I told him my whole story, the old man listening with an eagerness quite intense, but never more deeply interested than when I told of the splendors and magnificence of my father's house. He never wearied hearing of costly entertainments and great banquets, where troops of servants waited, and every wish of the guests was at once ministered to.

"And all this," cried he, at last, "all this, day after day, night after night, and not once a year only, as we see it here, on the Fräulein Sara's birthday!" And now the poor old man, as if to compensate himself for listening so long, broke out into a description of the festivities by which Herr Oppovich celebrated his daughter's birthday:

an occasion on which he invited all in his employment to pass the day at his villa, on the side of the bay, and when, by Hanserl's account, a most unbounded hospitality held sway. "There are no portions, no measured quantities, but each is free to eat and drink as he likes," cried Hans, who, with this praise, described a banquet of millennial magnificence. "But you will see for yourself," added he; "for even the 'yard' is invited."

I cautioned him strictly not to divulge what I had told him of myself; nor was it necessary, after all, for he well knew how Herr Ignaz resented the thought of any one in his service having other pretensions than such as grew out of his own favor towards them.

"You'd be sent away to-morrow, younker," said he, "if he but knew what you were. There's an old proverb shows how they think of people of quality: —

'Die Juden nicht dulden
Den Herrschaft mit Schulden.'

The Jews cannot abide the great folk, with their indebtedness; and to deem these inseparable is a creed.

"On the 31st of August falls the Fräulein's birthday, lad, and you shall tell me the next morning if your father gave a grander *fête* than that."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SAIL ACROSS THE BAY.

THE 31st of August dawned at last, and with the promise of a lovely autumnal day. It was the one holiday of the year at Herr Oppovich's: for Sunday was only externally observed in deference to the feelings of the Christian world, and clerks sat at their desks inside, and within the barred shutters the whole work of life went on as though a week-day. As for us in the yard, it was our day of most rigorous discipline; for Ignaz himself was wont to come down on a tour of inspection, and his quick glances were sure to detect at once the slightest irregularity or neglect. He seldom noticed me on these occasions. A word addressed to Hanserl as to how the "younker" was doing, would be all the recognition vouchsafed me, or, at most, a short nod of the head would convey that he had seen me. Hanserl's reports were, however, always favorable; and I had so far good reason to believe that my master was content with me.

From Hans, who had talked of nothing but this *fête* for three or four weeks, I had learned that a beautiful villa which Herr Ignaz owned on the west side of the bay was always opened. It was considered much too grand a place to live in, being of princely proportions and splendidly furnished; indeed, it had come into Herr Oppovich's possession on a mortgage, and the thought of using it as a residence never occurred to him. To have kept the grounds alone in order would have cost a moderate fortune; and as there was no natural supply of water on the spot, a steam-pump was kept in constant use to direct streams in different directions. This, which its former owner freely paid for, was an outlay that Herr Oppovich regarded as

most wasteful, and reduced at once to the very narrowest limits consistent with the life of the plants and shrubs around. The ornamental fountains were, of course, left unfed; *jets-d'eau* ceased to play; and the various tanks in which water-nymphs of white marble disported, were dried up; ivy and the wild vine draping the statues, and hiding the sculptured urns in leafy embrace.

Of the rare plants and flowers, hundreds, of course, died; indeed, none but those of hardy nature could survive this stinted aliment. Greenhouses and conservatories, too, fell into disrepair and neglect; but such was the marvellous wealth of vegetation that, fast as walls would crumble and architraves give way, foliage and blossom would spread over the ruin, and the rare plants within, mingling with the stronger vegetation without, would form a tangled mass of leafy beauty of surpassing loveliness; and thus the rarest orchids were seen stretching their delicate tendrils over forest-trees, and the cactus and the mimosa mingled with common field-flowers. If I linger amongst these things, it is because they contrasted so strikingly to me with the trim propriety and fastidious neatness of the Malibran Villa, where no leaf littered a walk, nor a single tarnished blossom was suffered to remain on its stalk. Yet was the Abazzia Villa a thousand times more beautiful. In the one, the uppermost thought was the endless care and skill of the gardeners, and the wealth that had provided them. The clink of gold seemed to rise from the crushed gravel as you walked; the fountains glittered with gold; the conservatories exhaled it. Here, however, it seemed as though Nature, rich in her own unbounded resources, was showing how little she needed of man or his appliances. It was the very exuberance of growth on every side; and all this backed by a bold mountain lofty as an Alp, and washed by a sea in front, and that sea the blue Adriatic.

I had often heard of the thrift and parsimony of Herr Oppovich's household. Even in the humble eating-house I frequented, sneers at its economies were frequent. No trace of such a saving spirit displayed itself on this occasion. Not merely were guests largely and freely invited, but carriages were stationed at appointed spots to convey them to

the villa, and a number of boats awaited at the mole for those who preferred to go by water. This latter mode of conveyance was adopted by the clerks and officials of the house, as savoring less of pretension; and so was it that just as the morning was ripening into warmth, I found myself one of a large company in a wide eight-oared boat, calmly skimming along towards Abazzia. By some accident I got separated from Hanserl; and when I waved my hand to him to join me, he delayed to return my salutation, for, as he said afterwards, I was *gar schön*, — quite fine, — and he did not recognize me.

It was true I had dressed myself in the velvet jacket and vest I had worn on the night of our own *fête*, and wore my velvet cap, without, however, the heron feather, any more than I put on any of my trinkets, or even my watch.

This studied simplicity on my part was not rewarded as I hoped for; since, scarcely were we under way, than my dress and "get-up" became the subject of an animated debate among my companions, who discussed me with a freedom and a candor that showed they regarded me simply as a sort of lay figure for the display of so much drapery.

"That's how they dress in the yard," cried one; "and we who have three times the pay, can scarcely afford broad-cloth. Will any one explain that to me?"

"There must be rare perquisites down there," chimed in another; "for they say that the old dwarf Hanserl has laid by two thousand gulden."

"They tell *me* five thousand," said another.

"Two or twenty-two would make no difference. No fellow on his pay could honestly do more than keep life in his body, not to speak of wearing velvet like the younker there."

A short digression now intervened, one of the party having suggested that in England velvet was the cheapest wear known, that all the laborers on canals and railroads wore it from economy, and that, in fact, it was the badge of a very humble condition. The assertion encountered some disbelief, and it was ultimately suggested to refer the matter to me for decision, this being the first evidence they had given of their recognition of me as a sentient being.

"What would *he* know?" broke in an elderly clerk; "he must have come away from England a mere child, seeing how he speaks German now."

"Or if he did know, is it likely he'd tell?" observed another.

"At all events, let us ask him what it costs. I say, Knabe, come here and let us see your fine clothes; we are all proud of having so grand a colleague."

"You might show your pride, then, more suitably than by insulting him," said I, with perfect calm.

Had I discharged a loaded pistol in the midst of them, the dismay and astonishment could not have been greater.

That any one "*aus dem Hof*" — "out of the yard" — should presume to think he had feelings that could be outraged, seemed a degree of arrogance beyond belief, and my word "insult" was repeated from mouth to mouth with amazement.

"Come here, Knabe," said the cashier, in a voice of blended gentleness and command, — "come here, and let us talk to you."

I arose and made my way from the bow to the stern of the boat. Short as the distance was, it gave me time to bethink me that I must repress all anger or irritation if I desired to keep my secret; so that when I reached my place, my mind was made up.

"Silk-velvet as I live!" said one who passed his hand along my sleeve as I went.

"No one wishes to offend you, youngster," said the cashier to me, as he placed me beside him; "nor when we talk freely to each other, as is our wont, are any of us offended."

"But you forget, sir," said I, "that I have no share in these freedoms, and that were I to attempt them, you'd resent the liberty pretty soon."

"The Knabe is right," "He says what's true," "He speaks sensibly," were muttered all around.

"You have been well educated, I suspect?" said the cashier, in a gentle voice; and now the thought that by a word — a mere word — I might compromise myself beyond recall flashed across me, and I answered, "I have learned some things."

"One of which was caution," broke in another; and a roar of laughter welcomed his joke.

Many a severer sarcasm would not have cut so deeply into me. The imputation of a reserve based on cunning was too much for my temper, and in a moment I forgot all prudence, and hotly said, "If I am such an object of interest to you, gentlemen, that you must know even the details of my education, the only way I see to satisfy this curiosity of yours is to say that, if you will question me as to what I know and what I do not, I will do my best to answer you."

"That's a challenge," cried one; "he thinks we are too illiterate to examine him."

"We see that you speak German fluently," said the cashier; "do you know French?"

I nodded assent.

"And Italian and English?"

"Yes; English is my native language."

"What about Greek and Latin, boy?"

"Very little Greek; some half-dozen Latin authors."

"Any Hebrew?" chimed in one, with a smile of half mockery.

"Not a syllable."

"That's a pity, for you could have chatted with Herr Ignaz in it."

"Or the Fräulein," muttered another. "She knows no Hebrew," "She does; she reads it well," "Nothing of the kind," were quickly spoken from many quarters; and a very hot discussion ensued, in which the Fräulein Sara's accomplishments and acquirements took the place of mine in public interest.

While the debate went on with no small warmth on either side, — for it involved a personal question that stimulated each of the combatants; namely, the amount of intimacy they enjoyed in the family and household of their master: a point on which they seemed to feel the most acute sensibility, — while this, therefore, continued, the cashier patted me good-humoredly on the arm, and asked me how I liked Fiume; if I had made any pleasant acquaintances; and how I usually passed my evenings? And while thus chatting pleasantly, we glided into the little bay of the villa, and landed.

As boat after boat came alongside the jetty, numbers rushed down to meet and welcome their friends. All seemed half wild with delight; and the adventures they had had on the road, the loveliness of the villa, and the courtesy they had been met with, resounded on every side. All had friends, eager to talk or to listen, — all but myself. I alone had no companionship; for in the crowd and confusion I could not find Hanserl, and to ask after him was but to risk the danger of an impertinence.

I sat myself down on a rustic bench at last, thinking that if I remained fixed in one spot I might have the best chance to discover him. And now I could mark the strange company, which, of every age, and almost of every condition, appeared to be present. If the marked features of the Hebrew abounded, there were types of the race that I had never seen before: fair-haired and olive-eyed, with a certain softness of expression, united with great decision about the mouth and chin. The red Jew, too, was there: the fierce-eyed, dark-browed, hollow-cheeked fellow, of piercing acuteness in expression, and an almost reckless look of purpose about him. There was greed, craft, determination, at times even violence, to be read in the faces; but never weakness, never imbecility; and so striking was this that the Christian physiognomy seemed actually vulgar when contrasted with those faces so full of vigorous meaning and concentration.

Nothing could be less like my father's guests than these people. It was not in dress and demeanor and general carriage that they differed, — in their gestures as they met, in their briefest greetings, — but the whole character of their habits, as expressed by their faces, seemed so unlike that I could not imagine any clew to their several ranks, and how this one was higher or greater than that. All the nationalities of Eastern Europe were there, — Hungarian, Styrian, Dalmatian, and Albanian. Traders all: this one bond of traffic and gain blending into a sort of family races and creeds the most discordant, and types whose forefathers had been warring with each other for centuries. Plenty of coarseness there was, unculture and roughness everywhere; but, strangely enough, little vulgarity and no

weakness, no deficient energy anywhere. They were the warriors of commerce; and they brought to the battle of trade resolution and boldness and persistence and daring not a whit inferior to what their ancestors had carried into personal conflict.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE FÊTE.

If, seated on my rustic bench under a spreading flex, I was not joining in the pleasures and amusements of those around me, I was tasting an amount of enjoyment to the full as great. It was my first holiday after many months of monotonous labor. It was the first moment in which I felt myself free to look about me without the irksome thought of a teasing duty, — that everlasting song of score and tally, which Hans and I sang duet fashion, and which at last seemed to enter into my very veins and circulate with my blood.

The scene itself was of rare beauty. Seated as I was, the bay appeared a vast lake, for the outlet that led seaward was backed by an island, and thus the coast-line seemed unbroken throughout. Over this wide expanse now hundreds of fishing-boats were moving in every direction, for the wind was blowing fresh from the land, and permitted them to tack and beat as they pleased. If thus in the crisply curling waves, the flitting boats, and the fast-flying clouds above, there was motion and life, there was, in the high peaked-mountain that frowned above me, and in the dark rocks that lined the shore, a stern, impassive grandeur that became all the more striking from contrast. The plashing water, the fishermen's cries, the merry laughter of the revellers as they strayed through brake and copse, seemed all but whispering sounds in that vast amphitheatre of mountain, so solemn was the influence of those towering crags that rose towards heaven.

"Have you been sitting there ever since?" asked the cashier, as he passed me with a string of friends.

"Ever since."

"Not had any breakfast?"

"None."

"Nor paid your compliments to Herr Ignaz and the Fräulein?"

I shook my head in dissent.

"Worst of all," said he, half rebukingly, and passed on. I now bethought me how remiss I had been. It is true it was through a sense of my own insignificant station that I had not presented myself to my host; but I ought to have remembered that this excuse could have no force outside the limits of my own heart; and so, as I despaired of finding Hanserl, whose advice might have aided me, I set out at once to make my respects.

A long, straight avenue, flanked by tall lime-trees, led from the sea to the house; and as I passed up this, crowded now like the chief promenade of a city, I heard many comments as I went on my dress and appearance. "What have we here?" said one. "Is this a prince or a mountebank?" "What boy, with a much-braid-bedizened velvet coat is this?" muttered an old German, as he pointed at me with his pipe-stick.

One pronounced me a fencing-master; but public reprobation found its limit at last by calling me a Frenchman. Shall I own that I heard all these with something much more akin to pride than to shame? The mere fact that they recognized me as unlike one of themselves — that they saw in me what was not "Fiumano" — was in itself a flattery; and as to the depreciation, it was pure ignorance! I am afraid that I even showed how defiantly I took this criticism, — showed it in my look, and showed it in my gait; for as I ascended the steps to the terrace of the villa, I heard more than one comment on my pretentious demeanor. Perhaps some rumor of the approach of a distinguished guest had reached Herr Oppovich where he sat, at a table with some of the magnates of Fiume, for he hastily arose and came forward to meet me. Just as I gained the last terrace, the old man stood bareheaded and bowing before me, a semicircle of wondering guests at either side of him.

"Whom have I the distinguished honor to receive?" said Herr Ignaz, with a profound show of deference.

"Don't you know me, sir? Owen, — Digby Owen."

"What! — how? — Eh — in heaven's name — sure it can't be! Why, I protest it is," cried he, laying his hand on my shoulder, as if to test my reality. "This passes all belief. Who ever saw the like! Come here, Knabe, come here." And slipping his hand within my arm, he led me towards the table he had just quitted. "Sara," cried he, "here is a guest you have not noticed; a high and well-born stranger, who claims all your attention. Let him have the place of honor at your side. This, ladies and gentlemen, is Herr Digby Owen, the stave-counter of my timber-yard!" And he burst, with this, into a roar of laughter, that, long pent up by an effort, now seemed to threaten him with a fit. Nor was the company slow in chorusing him; round after round shook the table, and it seemed as if the joke could never be exhausted.

All this time I stood with my eyes fixed on the Fräulein, whose glance was directed as steadfastly on me. It was a haughty look she bent on me, but it became her well, and I forgave all the scorn it conveyed in the pleasure her beauty gave me. My face, which at first was in a flame, became suddenly cold, and a faintish sickness was creeping over me, so that, to steady myself, I had to lay my hand on a chair. "Won't you sit down?" said she, in a voice fully as much command as invitation. She pointed to a chair a little distance from her own, and I obeyed.

The company appeared now somewhat ashamed of its rude display of merriment, and seeing how quietly and calmly I bore myself, — unresentingly too, — there seemed something like a reaction in my favor. Foreigners, it must be said, are generally sorry when betrayed into any exhibition of ill-breeding, and hastily seek to make amends for it. Perhaps Herr Oppovich himself was the least ready in this movement, for he continued to look on me with a strange blending of displeasure and amusement.

The business of breakfast was now resumed, and the servants passed round with the dishes, helping me amongst the rest. While I was eating, I heard — what, of course, was not meant for my ears — an explanation given by one of the company of my singular appearance. He had lived in England, and said that the English of every condition

had a passion for appearing to belong to some rank above their own; that to accomplish this there was no sacrifice they would not make, for these assumptions imposed upon those who made them fully as much as on the public they were made for. "You'll see," added he, "that the youth there, so long as he figures in that fine dress, will act up to it, so far as he knows how. He talked with a degree of assurance and fluency that gained conviction, and I saw that his hearers went along with him, and there soon began — very cautiously and very guardedly, indeed — a sort of examination of me and my pretensions, for which, fortunately for me, I was so far prepared.

"And do all English boys of your rank in life speak and read four languages?" asked Herr Ignaz, after listening some time to my answers.

"You are assuming to know his rank, papa," whispered Sara, who watched me closely during the whole interrogatory.

"Let him answer my question," rejoined the old man, roughly.

"Perhaps not all," said I, half amused at the puzzle I was becoming to them.

"Then how came it your fortune to know them, — that is, if you *do* know them?"

Slipping out of his question, I replied, "Nothing can be easier than to test that point. There are gentlemen here whose acquirements go far beyond mine."

"Your German is very good," said Sara. "Let me hear you speak French."

"It is too much honor for me," said I, bowing, "to address you at all."

"Is your Italian as neat in accent as that?" asked a lady near.

"I believe I am best in Italian, — of course, after English, — for I always talked it with my music-master, as well as with my teacher."

"Music-master!" cried Herr Ignaz; "what phoenix have we here?"

"I don't think we are quite fair to this boy," said a stern-featured, middle-aged man. "He has shown us that

there is no imposition in his pretensions, and we have no right to question him further. If Herr Ignaz thinks you too highly gifted for his service, young man, come over to Carl Bettmeyer's counting-house to-morrow at noon."

"I thank you, sir," said I, "and am very grateful; but if Herr Oppovich will bear with me, I will not leave him."

Sara's eyes met mine as I spoke, and I cannot tell what a flood of rapture her look sent into my heart.

"The boy will do well enough," muttered Herr Ignaz. "Let us have a ramble through the grounds, and see how the skittle-players go on."

And thus passed off the little incident of my appearance: an incident of no moment to any but myself, as I was soon to feel; for the company, descending the steps, strayed away in broken twos or threes through the grounds, as caprice or will inclined them.

If I were going to chronicle the *fête* itself, I might, perhaps, say there was a striking contrast between the picturesque beauty of the spot, and the pastime of those who occupied it. The scene recalled nothing so much as a village fair. All the simple out-of-door amusements of popular taste were there. There were conjurors and saltimbanques and fortune-tellers, lottery-booths and ninepin alleys and restaurants, only differing from their prototypes in that there was nothing to pay. If a considerable number of the guests were well pleased with the pleasures provided for them, there were others no less amused as spectators of these enjoyments, and the result was an amount of mirth and good humor almost unbounded. There were representatives of almost every class and condition, from the prosperous merchant or rich banker down to the humblest clerk, or even the porter of the warehouse; and yet a certain tone of equality pervaded all, and I observed that they mixed with each other on terms of friendliness and familiarity that never recalled any difference of condition; and this feature alone was an ample counterpoise to any vulgarity observable in their manners. If there was any "snobbery," it was of a species quite unlike what we have at home, and I could not detect it.

While I strolled about, amusing myself with the strange

sights and scenes around me, I suddenly came upon a sort of merry-go-round, where the performers, seated on small hobby-horses, tilted with a lance at a ring as they spun round, their successes or failures being hailed with cheers or with laughter from the spectators. To my intense astonishment, I might almost say shame, Hanserl was there! Mounted on a fiery little gray, with bloodshot eyes and a flowing tail, the old fellow seemed to have caught the spirit of his steed, for he stood up in his stirrups, and leaned forward with an eagerness that showed how he enjoyed the sport. Why was it that the spectacle so shocked me? Why was it that I shrunk back into the crowd, fearful that he might recognize me? Was it not well if the poor fellow could throw off, even for a passing moment, the weary drudgery of his daily life, and play the fool just for distraction's sake? All this I could have believed and accepted a short time before, and yet now a strange revulsion of feeling had come over me and I went away, well pleased that Hans had not seen nor claimed me. "These vulgar games don't amuse you," said a voice at my side; and I turned and saw the merchant who, at the breakfast-table, invited me to his counting-house.

"Not that," said I; "but they seem strange and odd at a private entertainment. I was scarce prepared to see them here."

"I suspect that is not exactly the reason," said he, laughing. "I know something of your English tone of exclusiveness, and how each class of your people has its appropriate pleasures. You scorn to be amused in low company."

"You seem to forget my own condition, sir."

"Come, come," said he, with a knowing look, "I am not so easily imposed upon, as I told you awhile back. I know England. Your ways and notions are all known to me. It is not in the place you occupy here young lads are found who speak three or four languages, and have hands that show as few signs of labor as yours. Mind," said he, quickly, "I don't want to know your secret."

"If I had a secret, it is scarcely likely I'd tell it to a stranger," said I, haughtily.

"Just so; you'd know your man before you trusted him.

Well, I'm more generous, and I'm going to trust you, whom I never saw till half an hour ago."

"Trust *me*!"

"Trust you," repeated he, slowly. "And first of all, what age would you give that young lady whose birthday we are celebrating?"

"Seventeen — eighteen — perhaps nineteen."

"I thought you'd say so; she looks nineteen. Well, I can tell you her age to an hour. She is fifteen to-day."

"Fifteen!"

"Not a day older, and yet she is the most finished coquette in Europe. Having given Fiume to understand that there is not a man here whose pretensions she would listen to, her whole aim and object is to surround herself with admirers, — I might say worshippers. Young fellows are fools enough to believe they have a chance of winning her favor, while each sees how contemptuously she treats the other. They do not perceive it is the number of adorers she cares for."

"But what is all this to me?"

"Simply that you'll be enlisted in that corps to-morrow," said he, with a malicious laugh; "and I thought I'd do you a good turn to warn you as to what is in store for you."

"Me? I enlisted! Why, just bethink you, sir, who and what I am: the very lowest creature in her father's employment."

"What does that signify? There's a mystery about you. You are not — at least you were not — what you seem now. You have as good looks and better manners than the people usually about her. She can amuse herself with you, and so far harmlessly that she can dismiss you when she's tired of you, and if she can only persuade you to believe yourself in love with her, and can store up a reasonable share of misery for you in consequence, you'll make her nearer being happy than she has felt this many a day."

"I don't understand all this," said I, doubtfully.

"Well, you will one of these days; that is, unless you have the good sense to take my warning in good part, and avoid her altogether."

"It will be quite enough for me to bear in mind who she is, and what I am!" said I, calmly.

"You think so? Well, I don't agree with you. At all events, keep what I have said to yourself, even if you don't mean to profit by it." And with this he left me.

That strange education of mine, in which M. de Balzac figured as a chief instructor, made me reflect on what I had heard in a spirit little like that of an ordinary lad of sixteen years of age. Those wonderful stories, in which passion and emotion represent action, and where the great game of life is played out at a fireside or in a window recess, and where feeling and sentiment war and fight and win or lose, — these same tales supplied me with wherewithal to understand this man's warnings, and at the same time to suspect his motives; and from that moment my life became invested with new interests and new anxieties, and to my own heart I felt myself a hero of romance.

As I sauntered on, revolving very pleasant thoughts to myself, I came upon a party who were picnicking under a tree. Some of them graciously made a place for me, and I sat down and ate my dinner with them. They were very humble people, all of them, but courteous and civil to my quality of stranger in a remarkable degree. Nor was I less struck by the delicate forbearance they showed towards the host; for, while the servant pressed them to drink Bordeaux and champagne, they merely took the little wines of the country, perfectly content with simple fare and the courtesy that offered them better.

When one of them asked me if I had ever seen a *fête* of such magnificence in my own country, my mind went back to that costly entertainment of our villa, and Pauline came up before me, with her long dark eyelashes, and those lustrous eyes beaming with expression, and flashing with a light that dazzled while it charmed. Coquetry has no such votaries as the young. Its artifices, its studied graces, its thousand rogueries, to *them* seem all that is most natural and most "naïve;" and thus every toss of her dark curls, every little mock resentment of her beautiful mouth, every bend and motion of her supple figure, rose to my mind, till I pictured her image before me, and thought I saw her.

"What a hunt I have had after you, Herr Engländer!"

said a servant, who came up to me all flushed and heated. "I have been over the whole park in search of you."

"In search of *me*? Surely you mistake."

"No; it is no mistake. I see no one here in a velvet jacket but yourself; and Herr Ignaz told me to find you and tell you that there is a place kept for you at his table, and they are at dinner now in the large tent before the terrace."

I took leave of my friends, who rose respectfully to make their adieux to the honored guest of the host, and I followed the servant to the house. I was not without my misgivings that the scene of the morning, with its unpleasant cross-examination of me, might be repeated, and I even canvassed myself how far I ought to submit to such liberties; but the event was not to put my dignity to the test. I was received on terms of perfect equality with those about me; and though the dinner had made some progress before I arrived, it was with much difficulty I could avoid being served with soup and all the earlier delicacies of the entertainment.

I will not dwell on the day that to recall seems more to me like a page out of a fairy tale than a little incident of daily life. I was, indeed, to all intents, the enchanted prince of a story, who went about with the lovely princess on his arm, for I danced the mazurka with the Fräulein Sara, and was her partner several times during the evening, and finished the *fête* with her in the cotillon; she declaring, in that calm quiet voice that did not seek to be unheard around, that I alone could dance the waltz à deux temps, and that I slid gently, and did not spring like a Fiumano, or bound like a French bagman, — a praise that brought on me some very menacing looks from certain commis-voyageurs near me, and which I, confident in my "skill of fence," as insolently returned.

"You are not to return to the Hof, Herr von Owen, tomorrow," said she, as we parted. "You are to wait on papa at his office at eleven o'clock." And there was a staid dignity in her words that spoke command; but in styling me "*von*," there was a whole world of recognition, and I kissed her hand as I said good-night with all the deference of her slave, and all the devotion of one who already felt her power and delighted in it.

CHAPTER XX.

OUR INNER LIFE.

LET me open this chapter with an apology, and I mean it not only to extend to errors of the past, but to whatever similar blunders I may commit hereafter. What I desire to ask pardon for is this: I find in this attempt of mine to jot down a portion of my life, that I have laid a most disproportionate stress on some passages the most insignificant and unimportant. Thus, in my last chapter I have dwelt unreasonably on the narrative of one day's pleasure, while it may be that a month, or several months, shall pass over with scarcely mention. For this fault — and I do not attempt to deny it is a fault — I have but one excuse. It is this: my desire has been to place before my reader the events, small as they might be, that influenced my life and decided my destiny. Had I not gone to this *fête*, for instance, — had I taken my holiday in some quiet ramble into the hills alone, or had I passed it, as I have passed scores of happy hours, in the solitude of my own room, — how different might have been my fate!

We all of us know how small and apparently insignificant are the events by which the course of our lives is shapen. A look we catch at parting, a word spoken that might have passed unheard, a pressure of the hand that might or might not have been felt, and straightway all our sailing orders are revoked, and instead of north we go south. Bearing this in mind, my reader will perhaps forgive me, and at least bethink him that these things are not done by me through inadvertence, but of intention and with forethought.

“So we are about to part,” said Hanserl to me, as I awoke and found my old companion at my bedside. “You’re the

twenty-fifth that has left me," said he, mournfully. "But look to it, Knabe, change is not always betterment."

"It was none of *my* doing, Hanserl; none of *my* seeking."

"If you had worn the gray jacket you wear on Sundays, there would have been none of this, lad! I have seen double as many years in the yard as you have been in the world, and none have ever seen me at the master's table or waltzing with the master's daughter."

I could not help smiling, in spite of myself, at the thought of such a spectacle.

"Nor is there need to laugh because I speak of dancing," said he, quickly. "They could tell you up in Kleptowitz there are worse performers than Hans Spöner; and if he is not an Englishman, he is an honest Austrian!"

This he said with a sort of defiance, and as if he expected a reply.

"I have told you already, Hans," said I, soothingly, "that it was none of my seeking if I am to be transferred from the yard. I was very happy there, — very happy to be with you. We were good comrades in the past, as I hope we may be good friends in the future."

"That can scarcely be," said he, sorrowfully. "I can have no friend in the man I must say 'sir' to. It's Herr Ignaz's order," went he on; "he sent for me this morning, and said, 'Hanserl, when you address Herr von Owen,' — aye, he said Herr *von* Owen, — 'never forget he is your superior; and though he once worked with you here in the yard, that was his caprice, and he will do so no more.'"

"But, Hans, my dear old friend."

"Ja, ja," said he, waving his hand. "Jetzt ist aus! It is all over now. Here's your reckoning," and he laid a slip of paper on the bed: "Twelve gulden for the dinners, three-fifty for wine and beer, two gulden for the wash. There were four kreutzers for the girl with the guitar; you bade me give her ten, but four was plenty, — that makes seventeen-six-and-sixty: and you've twenty-three gulden and thirty-four kreutzers in that packet, and so Leb wohl."

And, with a short wave of his hand, he turned away; and as he left the room, I saw that the other hand had been

drawn over his eyes, for Hanserl was crying; but I buried my face in the clothes, and sobbed bitterly.

My orders were to present myself at Herr Ignaz's private office by noon. Careful not to presume on what seemed at least a happy turn in my destiny, I dressed in my everyday clothes, studious only that they should be clean and well-brushed.

"I had forgotten you altogether, boy," said Herr Ignaz, as I entered the office, and he went on closing his desk and his iron safe before leaving for dinner. "What was it I had to say to you? Can you help me to it, lad?"

"I'm afraid not, sir; I only know that you told me to be here at this hour."

"Let me see," said he, thoughtfully. "There was no complaint against you?"

"None, sir, that I know of."

"Nor have you any to make against old Hanserl?"

"Far from it, sir. I have met only kindness from him."

"Wait, wait, wait," said he. "I believe I am coming to it. It was Sara's doing. Yes, I have it now. Sara said you should not be in the yard; that you had been well brought up and cared for. A young girl's fancy, perhaps. Your hands were white. But there is more bad than good in this. Men should be in the station they're fit for; neither above nor below it. And you did well in the yard; ay, and you liked it?"

"I certainly was very happy there, sir."

"And that's all one strives for," said he, with a faint sigh; "to be at rest, — to be at rest: and why would you change, boy?"

"I am not seeking a change, sir. I am here because you bade me."

"That's true. Come in and eat your soup with us, and we'll see what the girl says, for I have forgotten all about it."

He opened a small door which led by a narrow stair into a back street, and, shuffling along, with his hat drawn over his eyes, made for the little garden over the wooden bridge, and to his door. This he unlocked, and then bidding me follow, he ascended the stairs.

The room into which we entered was furnished in the most plain and simple fashion. A small table, with a coarse cloth and some common ware, stood ready for dinner, and a large loaf on a wooden platter, occupied the middle. There were but two places prepared; but the old man speedily arranged a third place, muttering to himself the while, but what I could not catch.

As he was thus engaged, the Fräulein entered. She was dressed in a sort of brown serge, which, though of the humblest tissue, showed her figure to great advantage, for it fitted to perfection, and designed the graceful lines of her shoulders, and her taper waist to great advantage. She saluted me with the faintest possible smile, and said: "You are come to dine with us?"

"If there be enough to give him to eat," said the old man, gruffly. "I have brought him here, however, with other thoughts. There was something said last night, — what was it, girl? — something about this lad, — do you remember it?"

"Here is the soup, father," said she, calmly. "We'll bethink us of these things by and by." There was a strange air of half-command in what she said, the tone of one who asserted a certain supremacy, as I was soon to see she did in the household. "Sit here, Herr von Owen," said she, pointing to my place, and her words were uttered like an order.

In perfect silence the meal went on; a woman-servant entering to replace the soup by a dish of boiled meat, but not otherwise waiting on us, for Sara rose and removed our plates and served us with fresh ones, — an office I would gladly have taken from her, and indeed essayed to do, but at a gesture, and a look that there was no mistaking, I sat down again, and, unmindful of my presence, they soon began to talk of business matters, in which, to my astonishment, the young girl seemed thoroughly versed. Cargoes of grain for Athens consigned to one house, were now to be transferred to some other. There were large orders from France for staves, to meet which some one should be promptly despatched into Hungary. Hemp, too, was wanted for England. There was a troublesome litiga-

tion with an Insurance Company at Marseilles, which was evidently going against the House of Oppovich. So unlike was all this the tone of dinner conversation I was used to that I listened in wonderment how they could devote the hour of social enjoyment and relaxation to details so perplexing and so vulgar.

"There is that affair of the leakage, too," cried Herr Ignaz, setting down his glass before drinking; "I had nigh forgotten it."

"I answered the letter this morning," said the girl, gravely. "It is better it should be settled at once, while the exchanges are in our favor."

"And pay — pay the whole amount," cried he, angrily.

"Pay it all," replied she, calmly. "We must not let them call us litigious, father. You have *friends* here," and she laid emphasis on the word, "that would not be grieved to see you get the name."

Twenty-seven thousand gulden!" exclaimed he, with a quivering lip. "And how am I to save money for your dowry, girl, with losses like these?"

"You forget, sir, we are not alone," said she, proudly. "This young Englishman can scarcely feel interested in these details." She arose as she spoke, and placed a few dishes of fruit on the table, and then served us with coffee; the whole done so unobtrusively and in such quiet fashion as to make her services appear a routine that could not call for remark.

"The 'Dalmat' will not take our freight," said he, suddenly. "There is some combination against us there."

"I will look to it," said she, coldly. "Will you try these figs, Herr von Owen? Fiume, they say, rivals Smyrna in purple figs."

"I will have no more to do with figs or olives either," cried out Herr Ignaz. "The English beat you down to the lowest price, and then refuse your cargo for one damaged crate. I have had no luck with England."

Unconsciously, I know it was, his eyes turned fully on me as he spoke, and there was a defiance in his look that seemed like a personal challenge.

"He does not mean it for you," said the Fräulein, gently

in my ear, and her voice gained a softness I did not know it possessed.

Perhaps the old man's thoughts had taken a very gloomy turn, for he leaned his head on his hand, and seemed sunk in revery. The Fräulein rose quietly, and, beckoning me to follow her, moved noiselessly into an adjoining room. This chamber, furnished a little more tastefully, had a piano, and some books and prints lay about on the tables.

"My father likes to be left alone at times," said she, gravely; "and when you know us better, you will learn to see what these times are." She took up some needlework she had been engaged on, and sat down on a sofa. I did not well know whether to take my leave or keep her company; and while I hesitated she appeared to read my difficulty, and said, "You are free, Herr von Owen, if you have any engagement."

"I have none," said I; then remembering that the speech might mean to dismiss me, I added hastily, "but it is time to go."

"Good-bye, then," said she, making me a slight bow; and I went.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OFFICE.

ON the following day the cashier sent for me to say it was Herr Oppovich's wish that I should be attached to some department in the office, till I had fully mastered its details, and then be transferred to another, and so on, till I had gradually acquainted myself with the whole business of the house. "It's an old caprice of Herr Ignaz's," said he, "which repeated failures have not yet discouraged him with. You're the fifth he has tried to make a supervisor of, and you'll follow the rest."

"Is it so very difficult to learn?" asked I, modestly.

"Perhaps to one of your acquirements it might not," said he, with quiet irony, "but, for a slight example: here, in this office, we correspond with five countries in their own languages; yonder, in that room, they talk modern Greek and Albanian and Servian; there's the Hungarian group, next that bow window, and that takes in the Lower Danube; and in what we call the Expeditions department there are fellows who speak seventeen dialects, and can write ten or twelve. So much for languages. Then what do you say to mastering — since that's the word they have for it — the grain trade from Russia, rags from Transylvania, staves from Hungary, fruit from the Levant, cotton from Egypt, minerals from Lower Austria, and woollen fabrics from Bohemia? We do something in all of these, besides a fair share in oak bark and hemp."

"Stop, for mercy's sake!" I cried out. "It would take a lifetime to gain a mere current knowledge of these."

"Then, there's the finance department," said he; "watching the rise and fall of the exchanges, buying and selling gold. Herr Ulrich, in that office with the blue door, could

tell you it's not to be picked up of an afternoon. Perhaps you might as well begin with him; his is not a bad school to take the fine edge off you."

"I shall do whatever you advise me."

"I'll speak to Herr Ulrich, then," said he; and he left me, to return almost immediately, and conduct me within the precincts of the blue door.

Herr Ulrich was a tall, thin, ascetic-looking man, with his hair brushed rigidly back from the narrowest head I ever saw. His whole idea of life was the office, which he arrived at by daybreak, and never left, except to visit the Bourse, till late at night. He disliked, of all things, new faces about him; and it was a piece of malice on the cashier's part to bring me before him.

"I believed I had explained to Herr Ignaz already," said he to the cashier, "that I am not a schoolmaster."

"Well, well," broke in the other, in a muffled voice, "try the lad. He may not be so incompetent. They tell me he has had some education."

Herr Ulrich raised his spectacles, and surveyed me from head to foot for some seconds. "You have been in the yard?" said he, in question.

"Yes, sir."

"And is counting oaken staves the first step to learning foreign exchanges, think you?"

"I should say not, sir."

"I know whose scheme this is, well enough," muttered he. "I see it all. That will do. You may leave us to talk together alone," said he to the cashier. "Sit down there, lad; there's your own famous newspaper, the 'Times.' Make me a *précis* of the money article as it touches Austrian securities and Austrian enterprises; contrast the report there given with what that French paper contains; and don't leave till it be finished." He returned to his high stool as he spoke, and resumed his work. On the table before me lay a mass of newspapers in different languages; and I sat down to examine them with the very vaguest notion of what was expected of me.

Determined to do something, — whatever that something might be, — I opened the "Times" to find out the money

article; but, little versed in journalism, I turned from page to page without discovering it. At last I thought I should find it by carefully scanning the columns; and so I began at the top and read the various headings, which happened to be those of the trials then going on. There was a cause of salvage on the part of the owners of the "Lively Jane;" there was a disputed ownership of certain dock warrants for indigo, a breach of promise case, and a suit for damages for injuries incurred on the rail. None of these, certainly, were financial articles. At the head of the next column I read: "Court of Probate and Divorce, — Mr. Spanks moved that the decree *nisi*, in the suit of Cleremont *v.* Cleremont, be made absolute. Motion allowed. The damages in this suit against Sir Roger Norcott have been fixed at eight thousand five hundred pounds."

From these lines I could not turn my eyes. They revealed nothing, it is true, but what I knew well must happen; but there is that in a confirmation of a fact brought suddenly before us, that always awakens deep reflection: and now I brought up before my mind my poor mother, deserted and forsaken, and my father, ruined in character, and perhaps in fortune.

I had made repeated attempts to find out my mother's address, but all my letters had failed to reach her. Could there be any chance of discovering her through this suit? Was it possible that she might have intervened in any way in it? And, last of all, would this lawyer, whose name appeared in the proceedings, take compassion on my unhappy condition, and aid me to discover where my mother was? I meditated long over all this, and I ended by convincing myself that there are few people in the world who are not well pleased to do a kind thing which costs little in the doing; and so I resolved I would write to Mr. Spanks, and address him at the court he practised in. I could not help feeling that it was at a mere straw I was grasping; but nothing more tangible lay within my reach. I wrote thus: —

"SIR, — I am the son and only child of Sir Roger and Lady Norcott; and seeing that you have lately conducted a suit against my father, I ask you, as a great favor, to let me know where my mother is now living, that I may write to her. I know that I am taking a

great liberty in obtruding this request upon you; but I am very friendless, and very little versed in worldly knowledge. Will you let both these deficiencies plead for me? and let me sign myself

“Your grateful servant,

“DIGBY NORCOTT.

“You can address me at the house of Hodnig and Oppovich, Fiume, Austria, where I am living as a clerk, and under the name of Digby Owen, — Owen being the name of my mother’s family.”

I was not very well pleased with the composition of this letter; but it had one recommendation, which I chiefly sought for,—it was short, and for this reason I hoped it might be favorably received. I read it over and over, each time seeing some new fault, or some omission to correct; and then I would turn again to the newspaper, and ponder over the few words that meant so much and yet revealed so little. How my mother’s position would be affected—if at all—by this decision I could not tell. Indeed, it was the mere accident of hearing divorce discussed at my father’s table that enabled me to know what the terms of the law implied. And thus I turned from my letter to the newspaper, and back again from the newspaper to my letter, so engrossed by the theme that I forgot where I was, and utterly forgot all about that difficult task Herr Ulrich had set me. Intense thought and weariness of mind, aided by the unbroken stillness of the place, made me heavy and drowsy. From poring over the paper, I gradually bent down till my head rested on it, and I fell sound asleep.

I must have passed hours thus, for it was already evening when I awoke. Herr Ulrich was about to leave the office, and had his hat on, as he aroused me.

“It is supper-time, youngster,” said he, laying his hand on my shoulder. “Yes, you may well wonder where you are. What are you looking for?”

“I thought, sir, I had written a letter just before I fell asleep. I was writing here.” And I turned over the papers and shook them, tossing them wildly about, to discover the letter, but in vain. It was not there. Could it have been that I had merely composed it in my mind, and never have committed it to paper? But that could scarcely be, seeing

how fresh in my memory were all the doubts and hesitations that had beset me.

"I am sure I wrote a letter here," said I, trying to recall each circumstance to my mind.

"When you have finished dreaming, lad, I will lock the door," said he, waiting to see me pass out.

"Forgive me one moment, sir, only one," cried I, wildly, scattering the papers over the table. "It is of consequence to me — what I have written."

"That is, if you have written anything," said he, dryly.

The grave tone of this doubt determined the conflict in my mind.

"I suppose you are right," said I; "it was a dream." And I arose and followed him out.

As I reached the foot of the stairs, I came suddenly on Herr Ignaz and his daughter. It was a common thing for her to come and accompany him home at the end of the day's work; and as latterly he had become much broken and very feeble, she scarcely missed a day in this attention.

"Oh, here he is!" I heard her say as I came up. What he replied I could not catch, but it was with some earnestness she rejoined,—

"Herr von Owen, my father wishes to say that they have mistaken his instructions regarding you in the office. He never expected you could at once possess yourself of all the details of a varied business; he meant that you should go about and see what branch you would like to attach yourself to, and to do this he will give you ample time. Take a week; take two; a month, if you like." And she made a little gesture of friendly adieu with her hand, and passed on.

CHAPTER XXII.

UNWISHED-FOR PROMOTION.

THE morning after this brief intimation I attached myself to that department of the house whose business was to receive and reply to telegraphic messages. I took that group of countries whose languages I knew, and addressed myself to my task in right earnest. An occupation whose chief feature is emergency will always possess a certain interest, but beyond this there was not anything attractive in my present pursuit. A peremptory message to sell this or buy that, to push on vigorously with a certain enterprise or to suspend all action in another, would perhaps form the staple of a day's work. When disasters occurred, too, it was their monetary feature alone was recorded. The fire that consumed a warehouse was told with reference to the amount insured; the shipwreck was related by incidents that bore on the lost cargo, and the damage incurred. Still it was less monotonous than the work of the office, and I had a certain pride in converting the messages — sometimes partly, sometimes totally unintelligible — into language that could be understood, that imparted a fair share of ambition to my labor.

My duty was to present myself, with my book in which I had entered the despatches, each evening, at supper-time, at Herr Ignaz's house. He would be at table with his daughter when I arrived, and the interview would pass somewhat in this wise: Herr Oppovich would take the book from my hands without a word or even a look at me, and the Fräulein, with a gentle bend of the head, but without the faintest show of more intimate greeting, would acknowledge me. She would continue to eat as I stood there, as unmindful of me as though I were a servant. Having scanned the book over,

he would hand it across to his daughter, and then would ensue a few words in whisper, after which the Fräulein would write opposite each message some word of reply or of comment such as, "Already provided for," "Further details wanted," "Too late," or such like, but never more than a few words, and these she would write freely, and only consulting herself. The old man — whose memory failed him more and more every day, and whose general debility grew rapidly — did no more than glance at the answers and nod an acceptance of them. In giving the book back to me, she rarely looked up, but if she did so, and if her eyes met mine, their expression was cold and almost defiant; and thus, with a slight bend of the head, I would be dismissed.

Nor was this reception the less chilling that, before I had well closed the door, they would be in full conversation again, showing that my presence it was which had inspired the constraint and reserve. These, it might be thought, were not very proud nor blissful moments to me, and yet they formed the happiest incident of my day, and I actually longed for the hour, as might a lover to meet his mistress. To gaze at will upon her pale and beautiful face, to watch the sunlight as it played upon her golden hair, which she wore — in some fashion, perhaps, peculiar to her race — in heavy masses of curls, that fell over her back and shoulders; her hand, too, a model of symmetry, and with the fingers rose-tipped, like the goddesses of Homer, affected me as a spell; and I have stood there unconsciously staring at it till warned by a second admonition to retire.

Perhaps the solitude in which I lived helped to make me dwell more thoughtfully on this daily-recurring interview; for I went nowhere, I associated with no one, I dined alone, and my one brisk walk for health and exercise I took by myself. When evening came, and the other clerks frequented the theatre, I went home to read, or as often to sit and think.

"Sara tells me," said the old man one day, when some rare chance had brought him to my office, — "Sara tells me that you are suffering from over-confinement. She thinks you look pale and worn, and that this constant work is telling on you."

"Far from it, sir. I am both well and happy; and if I needed to be made happier, this thoughtful kindness would make me so."

"Yes; she is very kind, and very thoughtful too; but, as well as these, she is despotic," said he, with a faint laugh; "and so she has decided that you are to exchange with M. Marsac, who will be here by Saturday, and who will put you up to all the details of his walk. He buys our timber for us in Hungary and Transylvania; and he, too, will enjoy a little rest from constant travel."

"I don't speak Hungarian, sir," began I, eager to offer an opposition to the plan.

"Sara says you are a quick learner, and will soon acquire it, — at least, enough for traffic."

"It is a business, too, that I suspect requires much insight into the people and their ways."

"You can't learn them younger, lad; and as all those we deal with are old clients of the house, you will not be much exposed to rogueries."

"But if I make mistakes, sir? If I involve you in difficulty and in loss?"

"You'll repay it by zeal, lad, and by devotion, as we have seen you do here."

He waved his hand in adieu, and left me to my own thoughts. Very sad thoughts they were, as they told me of separation from her that gave the whole charm to my life. Sara's manner to me had been so markedly cold and distant for some time past, so unlike what it had been at first, that I could not help feeling that, by ordering me away, some evidence of displeasure was to be detected. The old man I at once exculpated, for every day showed him less and less alive to the business of "the House;" though, from habit, he persisted in coming down every morning to the office, and believed himself the guide and director of all that went on there.

I puzzled myself long to think what I could have done to forfeit her favor. I had never in the slightest degree passed that boundary of deference that I was told she liked to exact from all in the service of the house. I had neglected no duty, nor, having no intimates or associates,

had I given opportunity to report of me that I had said this or that of my employers. I scrutinized every act of my daily life, and suggested every possible and impossible cause for this coldness; but without approaching a reason at all probable. While I thus doubted and disputed with myself, the evening despatches arrived, and among them a letter addressed to myself. It bore the post-mark of the town alone, with this superscription, "Digby Owen, Esq., at Messrs. Oppovich's, Fiume." I tore it open and read, —

"The address you wish for is, 'Lady Norcott, Sunday's Well, Cork, Ireland.'"

The writing looked an English hand, and the language was English. There was no date, nor any signature. Could it have been, then, that I had folded and sealed and sent on my letter — that letter I believed I had never written — without knowing it, and that the lawyer had sent me this reply, which, though long delayed, might have been postponed till he had obtained the tidings it conveyed? At all events, I had got my dear mother's address, — at least I hoped so. This point I resolved to ascertain at once, and sat down to write to her. It was a very flurried note I composed, though I did my very best to be collected. I told her how and where I was, and by what accident of fortune I had come here; that I had reasonable hopes of advancement, and even now had a salary which was larger than I needed. I was afraid to say much of what I wished to tell her, till I was sure my letter would reach her; and I entreated her to write to me by return of post, were it but a line. I need not say how many loves I sent her, nor what longings to be again beside her, to hold her hand, and hear her voice, and call her by that dearest of all the names affection cherishes. "I am going from this in a few days into Hungary," added I; "but address me here, and it shall be sent after me."

When I had finished my letter, I again turned my thoughts to this strange communication, so abrupt and so short. How came it to Fiume, too? Was it enclosed in some other letter, and to whom? If posted in Fiume, why not written

there? Ay; but by whom? Who could know that I had wished for my mother's address? It was a secret buried in my own heart.

I suddenly determined I would ask the Fräulein Sara to aid me in unravelling this mystery, which, of course, I could do without disclosing the contents of the note. I hurried off to the house, and asked if she would permit me to speak to her.

"Yes. The Fräulein was going out; but if my business was brief, she would see me."

She was in bonnet and shawl as I entered, and stood with one hand on a table, looking very calm but somewhat haughty.

"I beg your pardon, M. Owen," said she, "if I say that I can only give you a few minutes, and will not ask you even to sit down. If it be a matter of the office—"

"No, Mademoiselle; it is not a matter of the office—"

"Then, if it relate to your change of occupation—"

"No, Mademoiselle, not even to that. It is a purely personal question. I have got a letter, with a Fiume post-mark on it, but without the writer's name; and I am curious to know if you could aid me to discover him. Would you look at the hand and see if it be known to you?"

"Pray excuse me, M. Owen. I am the stupidest of all people in reading riddles or solving difficulties. All the help I can give you is to say how I treat anonymous letters myself. If they be simply insults, I burn them. If they relate what appear to be matters of fact, I wait and watch for them."

Offended by the whole tone of her manner, I bowed, and moved towards the door.

"Have you seen M. Marsac? I hear he has arrived."

"No, Mademoiselle; not yet."

"When you have conferred and consulted with him, your instructions are all prepared; and I suppose you are ready to start?"

"I shall be, Mademoiselle, when called upon."

"I will say good-bye, then," said she, advancing one step towards me, evidently intending to offer me her hand; but I replied by a low, very low bow, and retired.

I thought I should choke as I went down the stairs. My throat seemed to swell, and then to close up; and when I gained the shelter of the thick trees, I threw myself down on my face in the grass, and sobbed as if my heart was breaking. How I vowed and swore that I would tear every recollection of her from my mind, and never think more of her, and how her image ever came back clearer and brighter and more beautiful before me after each oath!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MAN WHO TRAVELLED FOR OUR HOUSE.

As I sat brooding over my fire that same evening, my door was suddenly opened, and a large burly man, looming even larger from an immense fur pelisse that he wore, entered. His first care was to divest himself of a tall Astracan cap, from which he flung off some snow-flakes, and then to throw off his pelisse, stamping the snow from his great boots, which reached half-way up the thigh.

"You see," cried he, at last, with a jovial air, — "you see I come, like a good comrade, and make myself at home at once."

"I certainly see so much," said I, dryly; "but whom have I the honor to receive?"

"You have the honor to receive Gustave Maurice de Marsac, young man, a gentleman of Dauphiné, who now masquerades in the character of first traveller for the respectable house of Hodnig and Oppovich."

"I am proud to make your acquaintance, M. de Marsac," said I, offering my hand.

"What age are you?" cried he, staring fixedly at me. "You can't be twenty?"

"No, I am not twenty."

"And they purpose to send you down to replace *me*!" cried he; and he threw himself back in his chair, and shook with laughter.

"I see all the presumption; but I can only say it was none of my doing."

"No, no; don't say presumption," said he, in a half-coaxing tone. "But I may say it, without vanity, it is not every man's gift to be able to succeed Gustave de Marsac. May I ask for a cigar? Thanks. A real Cuban,

I verily believe. I finished my tobacco two posts from this, and have been smoking all the samples — pepper and hempseed amongst them — since then."

"May I offer you something to eat?"

"You may, if you accompany it with something to drink. Would you believe it, Oppovich and his daughter were at supper when I arrived to report myself; and neither of them as much as said, Chevalier — I mean Mon. de Marsac — won't you do us the honor to join us? No. Old Ignaz went on with his meal, — cold veal and a potato salad, I think it was; and the fair Sara examined my posting-book to see I had made no delay on the road; but neither offered me even the courtesy of a glass of wine."

"I don't suspect it was from any want of hospitality," I began.

"An utter want of everything, *mon cher*. Want of decency; want of delicacy; want of due deference to a man of birth and blood. I see you are sending your servant out. Now, I beg, don't make a stranger — don't make what we call a 'Prince Russe' of me. A little quiet supper, and something to wash it down; good fellowship will do the rest. May I give your man the orders?"

"You will confer a great favor on me," said I.

He took my servant apart, and whispered a few minutes with him at the window. "Try Kleptomitz first," said he aloud, as the man was leaving; "and mind you say M. Marsac sent you. Smart 'bursche' you've got there. If you don't take him with you, hand him over to me."

"I will do so," said I; "and am happy to have secured him a good master."

"You'll not know him when you pass through Fiume again. I believe there's not my equal in Europe to drill a servant. Give me a Chinese, an Esquimaux; give me a Hottentot, and in six months you shall see him announce a visitor, deliver a letter, wait at table, or serve coffee, with the quiet dignity and the impassive steadiness of the most accomplished lackey. The three servants of Fiume were made by me, and their fortunes also. One has now the chief restaurant at Rome, in the Piazza di Spagna; the other is manager of the 'Iron Crown Hotel,' at Zurich; he

wished to have it called the 'Arms of Marsac,' but I forbade him. I said, 'No, Pierre, no. The De Marsacs are now travelling incog.' Like the Tavannes and the Rohans, we have to wait and bide our time. Louis Napoleon is not immortal. Do you think he is?"

"I have no reason to think so."

"Well, well, you are too young to take interest in politics; not but that *I* did at fourteen: I conspired at fourteen! I will show you a stiletto Mazzini gave me on my birthday; and the motto on the blade was, 'Au service du Roi.' Ah! you are surprised at what I tell you. I hear you say to yourself, 'How the devil did he come to this place? what led him to Fiume?' A long story that; a story poor old Dumas would give one of his eyes for. There's more adventure, more scrapes by villany, dangers and death-blows generally, in the last twenty-two years of my life — I am now thirty-six — than in all the Monte Cristos that ever were written. I will take the liberty to put another log on your fire. What do you say if we lay the cloth? It will expedite matters a little."

"With all my heart. Here are all my household goods," said I, opening a little press in the wall.

"And not to be despised, by any means. Show me what a man drinks out of, and I'll tell you what he drinks. When a man has got thin glasses like these, — *à la Mousse-line*, as we say, — his tipple is Bordeaux."

"I confess the weakness," said I, laughing.

"It is my own infirmity too," said he, sighing. "My theory is, plurality of wines is as much a mistake as plurality of wives. Coquette, if you will, with fifty, but give your affections to one. If I am anything, I am moral. What can keep your fellow so long? I gave him but two commissions."

"Perhaps the shops were closed at this hour."

"If they were, sir," said he, pompously, "at the word 'Marsac' they would open. Ha! what do I see here? — a piano? Am I at liberty to open it?" And without waiting for a reply, he sat down, and ran his hands over the keys with a masterly facility. As he flew over the octaves, and struck chords of splendid harmony, I could not help feeling

an amount of credit in all his boastful declarations just from this one trait of real power about him.

"I see you are a rare musician," said I.

"And it is what I know least," said he; "though Flotow said one day, 'If that rascal De Marsac takes to writing operas, I'll never compose another.' But here comes the supper;" and as he spoke my servant entered with a small basket with six bottles in it; two waiters following him, bearing a good-sized tin box, with a charcoal fire beneath.

"Well and perfectly done," exclaimed my guest, as he aided them to place the soup on the table, and to dispose some *hors d'œuvre* of anchovies, caviare, ham, and fresh butter on the board. "I am sorry we have no flowers. I love a bouquet. A few camellias for color, and some violets for odor. They relieve the grossness of the material enjoyments; they poetize the meal; and if you have no women at table, *mon cher*, be sure to have flowers: not that I object to both together. There, now, is our little bill of fare, — a white soup, a devilled mackerel, some truffles, with butter, and a capon with stewed mushrooms. Oysters there are none, not even those native shrimps they call scampi; but the wine will compensate for much: the wine is Røediger; champagne, with a faint suspicion of dryness. And as he has brought ice, we'll attack that Bordeaux you spoke of till the other be cool enough for drinking."

As he rattled on thus, it was not very easy for me to assure myself whether I was host or guest; but as I saw that this consideration did not distress *him*, I resolved it should not weigh heavily on *me*.

"I ordered a *compôte* of peaches with maraschino. Go after them and say it has been forgotten." And now, as he dismissed my servant on this errand, he sat down and served the soup, doing the honors of the board in all form. "You are called —"

"Digby is my Christian name," interrupted I, "and you can call me by it."

"Digby, I drink to your health; and if the wine had been only a little warmer, I'd say I could not wish to do so in a more generous fluid. No fellow of your age knows how to air his Bordeaux; hot flannels to the caraffe before

decanting are all that is necessary, and let your glasses also be slightly warmed. To sip such claret as this, and then turn one's eyes to that champagne yonder in the ice-pail, is like the sensation of a man who in his honeymoon fancies how happy he will be one of these days, *en secondes noces*. Don't you feel a sense of triumphant enjoyment at this moment? Is there not something at your heart that says, 'Hodnig and Oppovich, I despise you! To the regions I soar in you cannot come! To the blue ether I have risen, your very vision cannot reach!' Eh, boy! tell me this."

"No; I don't think you have rightly measured my feelings. On the whole, I rather suspect I bear a very good will to these same people who have enabled me to have these comforts."

"You pretend, then, to what they call gratitude?"

"I have that weakness."

"I could as soon believe in the heathen mythology! I like the man who is kind to me while he is doing the kindness, and I could, if occasion served, be kind to him in turn; but to say that I could retain such a memory of the service after years that it would renew in me the first pleasant sensations it created, and with these sensations the goodwill to requite them, is downright rubbish. You might as well tell me that I could get drunk simply by remembering the orgie I assisted at ten years ago."

"I protest against your sentiment and your logic too."

"Then we won't dispute the matter. We'll talk of something we can agree upon. Let us abuse Sara."

"If you do, you'll choose some other place to do it."

"What, do you mean to tell me that you can stand the haughty airs and proud pretensions of the young Jewess?"

"I mean to tell you that I know nothing of the Fräulein Oppovich but what is amiable and good."

"What do I care for amiable and good? I want a girl to be graceful, well-mannered, pleasing, lively to talk, and eager to listen. There, now, don't get purple about the cheeks, and flash at me such fiery looks. Here's the champagne, and we'll drink a bumper to her."

"Take some other name for your toast, or I'll fling your bottle out of the window."

"You will, will you!" said he, setting down his glass, and measuring me from head to foot.

"I swear it."

"I like that spirit, Digby; I'll be shot if I don't," said he, taking my hand, which I did not give very willingly. "You are just what I was some fifteen or twenty years ago, — warm, impulsive, and headstrong. It's the world — that vile old mill, the world — grinds that generous nature out of one! I declare I don't believe that a spark of real trustfulness survives a man's first moustaches, — and yours are very faint, very faint indeed; there's a suspicion of smut on the upper lip, and some small capillary flourishes along your cheek. That wine is too sweet. I'll return to the Bordeaux."

"I grieve to say I have no more than that bottle of it. It was some I bought when I was ill and threatened with ague."

"What profanation! anything would be good enough for ague. It is in a man's days of vigorous health he merits cherishing. Let us console ourselves with Rœdiger. Now, boy," said he, as he cleared off a bumper from a large goblet, "I'll give you some hints for your future, far more precious than this wine, good as it is. Gustave de Marsac, like Homer's hero, can give gold for brass, and instead of wine he will give you wisdom. First of all for a word of warning: don't fall in love with Sara. It's the popular error down here to do so, but it's a cruel mistake. That fellow that has the hemp-trade here, — what's his name, — the vulgar dog that wears mutton-chop whiskers, and fancies he's English because he gets his coats from London? I'll remember his name presently, — he has all his life been proposing for Sara, and begging off — as matters go ill or well with the House of Oppovich; and as he is a shrewd fellow in business, all the young men here think they ought to 'go in' for Sara too."

I should say here that, however distasteful to me this talk, and however willingly I would have repressed it, it was totally out of my power to arrest the flow of words

which with the force of a swollen torrent came from him. He drank freely, too, large goblets of champagne as he talked, and to this, I am obliged to own, I looked as my last hope of being rid of him. I placed every bottle I possessed on the table, and, lighting my cigar, resigned myself, with what patience I could, to the result.

"Am I keeping you up, my dear Digby?" cried he, at last, after a burst of abuse on Fiume and all it contained that lasted about half an hour.

"I seldom sit up so late," was my cautious reply; "but I must own I have seldom such a good excuse."

"You hit it, boy; that was well and truly spoken. As a talker of the highest order of talk, I yield to no man in Europe. Do you remember Duvergier saying in the *Chambre*, as an apology for being late, 'I dined with De Marsac'?"

"I cannot say I remember that."

"How could you? You were an infant at the time." Away he went after this into reminiscences of political life, — how deep he was in that Spanish marriage question, and how it caused a breach, — an irreparable breach between Guizot and himself, when that woman, "you know whom I mean, let out the secret to Bulwer. Of course I ought not to have confided it to her. I know all that as well as you can tell it me, but who is wise, who is guarded, who is self-possessed at all times?"

Not entirely trustful of what he was telling me, and little interested in it besides, I brought him back to Fiume, and to the business that was now about to be confided to me.

"Ah, very true; you want your instructions. You shall have them, not that you'll need them long, *mon cher*. Six months — what am I saying? — three will see it all up with Hodnig and Oppovich."

"What do you mean?" cried I, eagerly.

"Just simply what I say."

It was not very easy for me to follow him here, but I could gather, amidst a confused mass of self-glorification, prediction, and lamentation over warnings disregarded, and such like, that the great Jew house of "Nathanheimer" of Paris was the real head of the firm of Hodnig and Oppovich.

"The Nathanheimers own all Europe and a very considerable share of America," burst he out. "You hear of a great wine-house at Xeres, or a great corn-merchant at Odessa, or a great tallow-exporter at Riga. It's all Nathanheimer! If a man prospers and shows that he has skill in business, they'll stand by him, even to millions. If he blunders, they sweep him away, as I brush away that cork. There must be no failures with *them*. That's their creed."

He proceeded to explain how these great potentates of finance and trade had agencies in every great centre of Europe, who reported to them everything that went on, who flourished, and who foundered; how, when enterprises that promised well presented themselves, Nathanheimer would advance any sum, no matter how great, that was wanted. If a country needed a railroad, if a city required a boulevard, if a seaport wanted a dock, they were ready to furnish each and all of them. The conditions, too, were never unfair, never ungenerous, but still they bargained always for something besides money. They desired that this man would aid such a project here, or oppose that other there. Their interests were so various and widespread that they needed political power everywhere, and they had it.

One offence they never pardoned, never condoned, which was any, the slightest, insubordination amongst those they supported and maintained. Marsac ran over a catalogue of those they had ruined in London, Amsterdam, Paris, Frankfort, and Vienna, simply because they had attempted to emancipate themselves from the serfdom imposed upon them. Let one of the subordinate firms branch out into an enterprise unauthorized by the great house, and straightway their acceptances become dishonored, and their credit assailed. In one word, he made it appear that from one end of Europe to the other the whole financial system was in the hands of a few crafty men of immense wealth, who unthroned dynasties, and controlled the fate of nations, with a word.

He went on to show that Oppovich had somehow fallen into disgrace with these mighty patrons. "Some say that he is too old and too feeble for business, and hands over to Sara details that she is quite unequal to deal with; some

aver that he has speculated without sanction, and is intriguing with Greek democrats; others declare that he has been merely unfortunate; at all events, his hour has struck. Mind my words, three months hence they'll not have Nathanheimer's agency in their house, and I suspect you'll see our friend Bettmeyer will succeed to that rich inheritance."

Rambling on, now talking with a vagueness that savored of imbecility, now speaking with a purposelike acuteness and power that brought conviction, he sat till daybreak, drinking freely all the time, and at last so overwhelming me with strange revelations that I was often at a loss to know whether it was he that was confounding me, or that I myself had lost all control of right reason and judgment.

"You're dead beat, my poor fellow," said he at last, "and it's your own fault. You've been drinking nothing but water these last two hours. Go off to bed now, and leave me to finish this bottle. After that I'll have a plunge off the end of the mole, cold enough it will be, but no ice, and you'll find me here at ten o'clock with a breakfast appetite that will astonish you."

I took him at his word, and said "Good-night."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MY INSTRUCTIONS.

My friend did not keep his self-made appointment with me at breakfast, nor did I see him for two days, when we met in the street.

"I have gone over to the enemy," said he; "I have taken an engagement with Bettmeyer: six thousand florins and all expenses, — silver florins, *mon cher*; and if you're wise," added he in a whisper, "you'll follow my lead. Shall I say a word for you?"

I thanked him coldly, and declined the offer.

"All right; stick to gratitude, and you'll see where it will land you," said he, gayly. "I've sent you half a dozen letters to friends of mine up yonder;" and he pointed towards the North. "You'll find Hunyadi an excellent fellow, and the Countess charming; don't make love to her, though, for Tassilo is a regular Othello. As for the Erdödis, I only wish I was going there, instead of you; — such pheasants, such women, such Tokay, their own vintage! Once you're down in Transylvania, write me word whom you'd like to know. They're all dear friends of mine. By the way, don't make any blunder about that Hunyadi contract. The people here will want you to break it, — don't, on any account. It's the finest bargain ever was made; splendid timber, magnificent bark, and the cuttings alone worth all the money."

He rattled out this with his own headlong speed, and was gone before I well knew I had seen him.

That evening I was ordered to Herr Oppovich's house to receive my last instructions. The old man was asleep on a sofa, as I entered, and Sara seated at a table by the fire, deeply engaged in accounts.

"Sit down, Herr Owen," — she had ceased to call me Von Owen, — "and I will speak to you in a minute."

I was not impatient at the delay, for I had time to gaze at her silken hair, and her faultless profile, and the beautiful outline of her figure, as, leaning her head on her hand, she bent over the table.

"I cannot make this come right, — are you clever at figures?" asked she.

"I cannot say it is my gift, but I will do my best to aid you." And now we were seated side by side, poring over the same page; and as she had placed one taper finger next the column of figures, I did so likewise, thinking far less of the arithmetic than of the chance of touching her hand with mine.

"These figures are somewhat confusing," she said. "Let us begin at the top, — fourteen hundred and six hundred, make two thousand, and twelve hundred, three thousand two hundred, — now is this a seven or a three?"

"I'd say a three."

"I've called it a seven, because M. Marsac usually writes his sevens in this way."

"These are De Marsac's, then?" asked I.

"And why 'De,' may I ask?" said she, quickly; "why not Marsac, as I called him?"

"I took his name as he gave it me."

"You know him, then? Oh, I had forgotten, — he called on you the night he came. Have you seen him since?"

"Only passingly, in the street."

"Had he time to tell you that he has been dismissed?"

"Yes; he said he was now in Mr. Bettmeyer's office."

"Shall I tell you why?" She stopped, and her cheek became crimson, while her eyes sparkled with an angry fire that actually startled me. "But let us finish this. Where were we?" She now leaned her head down upon her hands, and seemed overcome by her emotion. When she looked up again, her face was perfectly pale, and her eyes sad and weariful. "I am afraid we shall wake him," said she, looking towards her father; "come into this room here. So this man has been talking of us?" cried she, as soon as we had passed into the adjoining room. "Has he told you how

he has requited all my father's kindness? how he has repaid his trustfulness and faith in him? Speak freely if you wish me to regard you as a friend."

"I would that you might, Fräulein. There is no name I would do so much to win."

"But you are a gentleman, and with noble blood. Could you stoop to be the friend of —" Here she hesitated, and, after an effort, added, "A Jew?"

"Try me, prove me," said I, stooping till my lips touched her hand.

She did not withdraw her hand, but left it in mine, as I pressed it again and again to my lips.

"He told you, then," said she, in a half-whisper, "that our house was on the brink of ruin; that in a few weeks, or even less, my father would not face the exchange, — did he not say this?"

"I will tell you all," said I, "for I know you will forgive me when I repeat what will offend you to hear, but what is safer you should hear." And, in the fewest words I could, I related what Marsac had told me of the house and its difficulties. When I came to that part which represented Oppovich as the mere agent of the great Parisian banker, — whose name I was not quite sure of, — I faltered and hesitated.

"Go on," said she, gently. "He told you that Baron Nathanheimer was about to withdraw his protection from us?"

I slightly bent my head in affirmation.

"But did he say why?"

"Something there was of rash enterprise, of speculation unauthorized — of —"

"Of an old man with failing faculties," said she, in the same low tone; "and of a young girl, little versed in business, but self-confident and presumptuous enough to think herself equal to supply his place. I have no doubt he was very frank on this head. He wrote to Baron Elias, who sent me his letter, — the letter he wrote of us while eating our bread. It was not handsome of him, — was it, sir?"

I can give no idea, not the faintest, of the way she said

these few words, nor of the ineffable scorn of her look, while her voice remained calm and gentle as ever.

"No; it was not handsome."

She nodded to me to proceed, and I continued, —

"I have told you nearly everything; for of himself and his boastfulness —"

"Oh! do not tell me of that. I am in no laughing mood, and I would not like to hear of it. What did he say of the Hunyadi affair?"

"Nothing, or next to nothing. He offered me letters of introduction to Count Hunyadi; but beyond that there was no mention of him."

She arose as I said this, and walked slowly up and down the room. I saw she was deep in thought, and was careful not to disturb or distract her. At last she opened a writing-desk, and took out a roll of papers fastened by a tape.

"These," said she, "you will take with you, and carefully read over. They are the records of a transaction that is now involving us in great trouble, and which may prove more than trouble. M. Marsac has been induced — how, we shall not stop to inquire — to contract for the purchase of an extensive wood belonging to Graf Hunyadi; the price, half a million of francs. We delayed to ratify an agreement of such moment, until more fully assured of the value of the timber; and while we deliberated on the choice of the person to send down to Hungary, we have received from our correspondent at Vienna certain bills for acceptance in payment of this purchase. You follow me, don't you?"

"Yes. As I understand it, the bargain was assumed to be ratified?"

"Just so."

She paused; and, after a slight struggle with herself, went on, —

"The contract, legally drawn up and complete in every way, *was* signed; not, however, by my father, but by my brother. You have heard, perhaps, that I have a brother. Bad companionship and a yielding disposition have led him into evil, and for some years we have not seen him. Much misfortune has befallen him; but none greater, per-

haps, than his meeting with Marsac; for, though Adolf has done many things, he would not have gone thus far without the promptings of this bad man."

"Was it his own name he wrote?" asked I.

"No; it was my father's," and she faltered at the word; and as she spoke it, her head fell heavily forward, and she covered her face with her hands.

She rallied, however, quickly, and went on. "We now know that the timber is not worth one-fourth of this large sum. Baron Elias himself has seen it, and declares that we have been duped or—worse. He insists that we rescind the contract, or accept all its consequences. The one is hopeless, — the other ruin. Meanwhile, the Baron suspends farther relations with us, and heavy acceptances of ours will soon press for payment. I must not go into this," said she, hurriedly. "You are very young to charge with such a mission; but I have great faith in your loyalty. You will not wrong our trust?"

"That I will not."

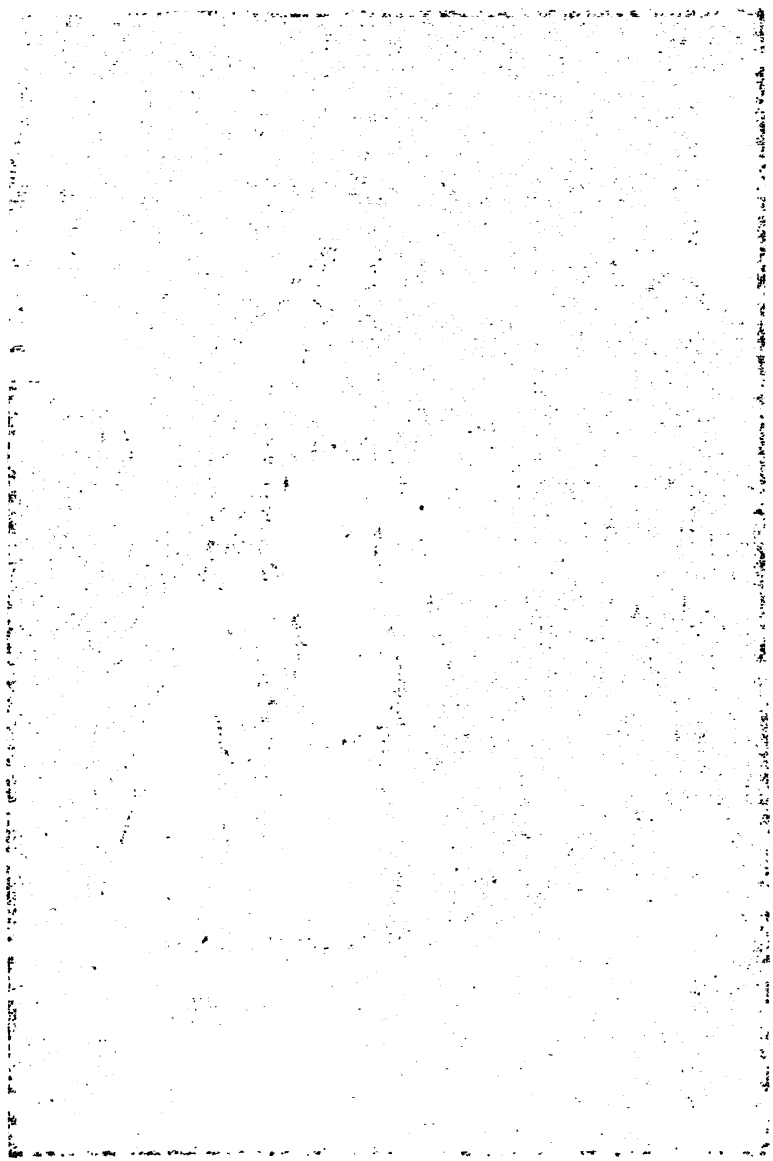
"You will go to Graf Hunyadi, and speak with him. If he be—as many of his countrymen are—a man of high and generous feeling, he will not bring ruin upon us, when our only alternative would be to denounce our own. You are very young; but you have habits of the world and society. Nay,—I am not seeking to learn a secret; but you know enough to make you companionable and acceptable, where any others in our employ would be inadmissible. At all events, you will soon see the sort of man we have to deal with, and you will report to me at once."

"I am not to tell him how this signature has been obtained?" asked I, awaiting the reply.

"That would be to denounce the contract at once," cried she, as though this thought had for the first time struck her.

"You know the penalty of a forgery here. It is the galleys for life. He must be saved at all events. Don't you see," cried she, eagerly, "I can give you no instructions. I have none to give. When I say I trust you, — I have told you all."

"Has Herr Ignaz not said how he would wish me to act?"



"I am in his meeting with Versace; for, though Adelf is a good fellow, he would not have gone so far with the dealings of this bad man."

"Was it his own name he wrote?" asked I.

"No! it was my father's," and she faltered at the word. Then she snook it, her head fell heavily forward, and she covered her face with her hands.

He recoiled, however, quickly, and went on. "We must know that the timber is not worth one-fourth of this large sum. Baron Elias himself has seen it, and declares that we have been duped or—worse. He insists that we rescind the contract, or accept all its consequences. The one involves,—the other ruin. Meanwhile, the Baron suspends further relations with us, and heavy acceptances of ours will soon fall due for payment. I must not go into this," said she harshly. "You are very young to charge with such an issue; but I have great faith in your loyalty. You will not wrong our trust?"

"That I will not."

"You will go to Graf Hunyadi, and speak with him.

As he—as many of his countrymen are—a man of high and generous feeling, he will not bring ruin upon us. What our only alternative would be to denounce our own. You are very young; but you have habits of the world and a society. No,—I am not seeking to learn a secret; if you know enough to make you companionable and accessible, where any others in our employ would be inadmissible. At all events, you will soon see the sort of man we have to deal with, and you will report to me to-morrow."

"I am not to tell him how this signature has been obtained?" asked I, awaiting the reply.

"That would be to denounce the contract at once," said she, as though this thought had for the first time struck her.

"You know the penalty of a forgery here. It is the gall for life. He must be saved at all events. Don't you see?" cried she, eagerly. "I can give you no instructions. I have none to give. When I say I trust you,—I have told all."

"Has Herr Ignaz not said how he would wish to act?"



Parting with Fräulein Lora.

11

"My father knows nothing of it all! Nothing. You have seen him, and you know how little he is able now to cope with a difficulty. The very sense that his faculties are not what they were overcomes him, even to tears."

Up to this she had spoken with a calm firmness that had lent a touch of almost sternness to her manner, but at the mention of her poor father's condition, her courage gave way, and she turned away and hid her face, but her convulsed shoulders showed how her emotion was overcoming her. I went towards her, and took her hand in both my own. She left it to me while I kissed it again and again.

"Oh, Sara," I whispered rather than spoke, "if you knew how devoted I am to you, if you knew how willingly I would give my very life for you, you would not think yourself friendless at this hour. Your trust in me has made me forget how lonely I am, and how humble, — to forget all that separates us, even to telling that I love you. Give me one word — only one — of hope; or if not that, let your dear hand but close on mine, and I am yours forever."

She never spoke, however, and her cold fingers returned no pressure to mine.

"I love you; I love you!" I muttered, as I covered her hand with kisses.

"There! Do you not hear?" cried she, suddenly. "My father is calling me."

"Sara, Sara! Where is Sara?" cried the old man, in a weak, reedy voice.

"I am coming, dear father," said she. "Good-bye, Digby; remember that I trust you!"

She waved me a farewell, and, with a faint, sad smile, she moved away. As she reached the door, however, she turned, and, with a look of kindly meaning, said, "Trust you in all things."

I sprang forward to clasp her to my heart; but the door closed on her, and I was alone.

CHAPTER XXV.

"ON THE ROAD" IN CROATIA.

I PASSED half the night that followed in writing to my mother. It was a very long epistle, but, in my fear lest, like so many others, it should not ever reach her, it was less expansive and candid than I could have wished. Sara's name did not occur throughout, and yet it was Sara's image was before me as I wrote, and to connect my mother in interest for Sara was my uppermost thought. Without touching on details that might awaken pain, I told how I had been driven to attempt something for my own support, and had not failed.

"I am still," I wrote, "where I started, but in so far a different position that I am now well looked on and trusted, and at this moment about to set out on a mission of importance. If I should succeed in doing what I am charged with, it will go far to secure my future, and then, dearest mother, I will go over to fetch you, for I will no longer live without you."

I pictured the place I was living in, and its climate, as attractively as I was able, and said, what I verily believed, that I hoped never to leave it. Of my father I did not venture to speak; but I invited her, if the course of our correspondence should prove assured, to tell me freely all about her present condition, and where and how she was.

"You will see, dear mother," said I, in conclusion, "that I write in all the constraint of one who is not sure who may read him. Of the accident by which the address I now give this letter reached me, I will tell when I write again. Meanwhile, though I shall not be here to receive it at once, write to me, to the care of Hodnig and Oppovich, and add, 'to be forwarded.'"

I enclosed a little photograph of the town, as seen from the bay, and though ill done and out of drawing, it still conveyed some notion of the pretty spot with its mountain framework.

I had it in my head to write another letter, and, indeed, made about a dozen attempts to begin it. It was to Pauline. Nothing but very boyishness could have ever conceived such a project, but I thought—it was very simple of me!—I thought I owed it to her, and to my own loyalty, to declare that my heart had wandered from its first allegiance, and fixed its devotion on another. I believed—I was young enough to believe it—that I had won her affections, and I felt it would be dishonorable in me to deceive her as to my own. I suppose I was essaying a task that would have puzzled a more consummate tactician than myself, for certainly nothing could be more palpable than my failures; and though I tried, with all the ingenuity I possessed, to show that in my altered fortunes I could no longer presume to retain any hold on her affections, somehow it would creep out that my heart had opened to a sentiment far deeper and more enthralling than that love which began in a polka and ended at the railway.

I must own I am now grateful to my stupidity and ineptness, which saved me from committing this great blunder, though at the time I mourned over my incapacity, and bewailed the dulness that destroyed every attempt I made to express myself gracefully. I abandoned the task at length in despair, and set to work to pack up for my journey. I was to start at daybreak for Agram, where some business would detain me a couple of days. Thence I was to proceed to a small frontier town in Hungary, called Ostovich, on the Drave, where we owned a forest of oak scrub, and which I was empowered to sell, if an advantageous offer could be had. If such should not be forthcoming, my instructions were to see what water-power existed in the neighborhood to work saw-mills, and to report fully on the price of labor, and the means of conveyance to the coast. If I mention these details, even passingly, it is but to show the sort of work that was intrusted to me, and how naturally my pride was touched at feeling how great and important

were the interests confided to my judgment. In my own esteem, at least, I was somebody. This sentiment, felt in the freshness of youth, is never equalled by anything one experiences of triumph in after life, for none of our later successes come upon hearts joyous in the day-spring of existence, hopeful of all things, and, above all, hearts that have not been jarred by envy and made discordant by ungenerous rivalry.

There was an especial charm, too, in the thought that my life was no every-day common-place existence, but a strange series of ups and downs, changes and vicissitudes, calling for continual watchfulness, and no small amount of energy; in a word, I was a hero to myself, and it is wonderful what a degree of interest can be imparted to life simply by that delusion. My business at Agram was soon despatched. No news of the precarious condition of our "house" had reached this place, and I was treated with all the consideration due to the confidential agent of a great firm. I passed an evening in the society of the town, and was closely questioned whether Carl Bettmeyer had got over his passion for the Fräulein Sara; or was she showing any disposition to look more favorably on his addresses. What fortune Oppovich could give his daughter, and what sort of marriage he aspired to for her, were all discussed. There was one point, however, all were agreed upon, that nothing could be done without the consent of the "Baron," as they distinctively called the great financier of Paris, whose sway, it appeared, extended not only to questions of trade and money, but to every relation of domestic life.

"They say," cried one, "that the Baron likes Bettmeyer, and has thrown some good things in his way of late."

"He gave him a share in that new dock contract at Pola."

"And he means to give him the directorship of the Viecovar line, if it ever be made."

"He'll give him Sara Oppovich for a wife," said a third, "and that's a better speculation than them all. Two millions of florins at least."

"She's the richest heiress in Croatia."

"And does n't she know it!" exclaimed another. "The

last time I was up at Fiume, old Ignaz apologized for not presenting me to her, by saying, 'Yesterday was her reception day; if you are here next Wednesday, I'll introduce you.'

"I thought it was only the nobles had the custom of reception days?"

"Wealth is nobility nowadays; and if Ignaz Oppovich was not a Jew, he might have the best blood of Austria for a son-in-law."

The discussion soon waxed warm as to whether Jews did or did not aspire to marriage with Christians of rank, the majority opining to believe that they placed title and station above even riches, and that no people had such an intense appreciation of the value of condition as the Hebrew.

"That Frenchman who was here the other day, Marsac, told me that the man who could get the Stephen Cross for old Oppovich, and the title of Chevalier, would be sure of his daughter's hand in marriage."

"And does old Ignaz really care for such a thing?"

"No, but the girl does; she's the haughtiest and the vainest damsel in the province."

It may be believed that I found it very hard to listen to such words as these in silence, but it was of the last importance that I should not make what is called an *éclat*, or bring the name of Oppovich needlessly forward for town talk and discussion; I therefore repressed my indignation and appeared to take little interest in the conversation.

"You've seen the Fräulein, of course?" asked one of me.

"To be sure he has, and has been permitted to kneel and kiss her hand on her birthday," broke in another.

And while some declared that this was mere exaggeration and gossip, others averred that they had been present and witnessed this act of homage themselves.

"What has this young gentleman seen of this hand-kissing?" said a lady of the party, turning to me.

"That it was always an honor conferred even more than a homage rendered, Madam," said I, stepping forward and kissing her hand; and a pleasant laughter greeted this mode of concluding the controversy.

"I have got a wager about you," said a young man to me, "and you alone can decide it. Are you or are you not from Upper Austria?"

"And are you a Jew?" cried another.

"If you'll promise to ask me no more questions, I'll answer both of these, — I am neither Jew nor Austrian."

It was not, however, so easy to escape my questioners; but as their curiosity seemed curbed by no reserves of delicacy, I was left free to defend myself as best I might, and that I had not totally failed, I gathered from hearing an old fellow whisper to another, —

"You'll get nothing out of him: if he's not a Jew by birth, he has lived long enough with them to keep his mind to himself."

Having finished all I had to do at Agram, I started for Ostovitz. I could find no purchaser for our wood; indeed every one had timber to sell, and forests were offered me on all sides. It was just at that period in Austria when the nation was first waking to thoughts of industrial enterprise, and schemes of money-getting were rife everywhere; but such was the ignorance of the people, so little versed were they in affairs, that they imagined wealth was to pour down upon them for the wishing, and that Fortune asked of her votaries neither industry nor thrift.

Perhaps I should not have been led into these reflections here if it were not that I had embodied them, or something very like them, in a despatch I sent off to Sara, — a despatch on which I had expended all my care to make it a masterpiece of fine writing and acute observation. I remember how I expatiated on the disabilities of race, and how I dwelt upon the vices of those lethargic temperaments of Eastern origin which seemed so wanting in all that energy and persistence which form the life of commerce.

This laborious essay took me an entire day to write; but when I had posted it at night, I felt I had done a very grand thing, not only as an intellectual effort, but as a proof to the Fräulein how well I knew how to restrict myself within the limits of my duties; for not a sentence, not a syllable, had escaped me throughout to recall thoughts of anything but business. I had asked for certain instructions about

Hungary, and on the third day came the following, in Sara's hand: —

"HERR DIGBY, — There is no mention in your esteemed letter of the 4th November of Kraus's acceptance, nor have you explained to what part of Heydäger's contract Hauser now objects. Freight is still rising here, and it would be imprudent to engage in any operations that involve exportation. Gold is also rising, and the Bank discount goes daily higher. I am obliged to you for your interesting remarks on ethnology, though I am low-minded enough to own, I could have read with more pleasure whether the floods in the Drave have interfered with the rafts, and also whether these late rains have damaged the newly sown crops.

"If you choose to see Pesth and Buda, you will have time, for Count Hunyadi will not be at his chateau till nigh Christmas; but it is important you should see him immediately on his arrival, for his intendant writes to say that the Graf has invited a large party of friends to pass the festival with him, and will not attend to any business matters while they remain. Promptitude will be therefore needful. I have nothing to add to your instructions already given. Although I have not been able to consult my father, whose weakness is daily greater, I may say that you are empowered to make a compromise, if such should seem advisable, and your drafts shall be duly honored, if, time pressing, you are not in a position to acquaint us with details.

"The weather here is fine now. I passed yesterday at Abazzia, and the place was looking well. I believe the Archduke will purchase it, and, though sorry on some accounts, I shall be glad on the whole.

"For Hodnig and Oppovich,

"SARA OPPOVICH.

"Of course, if Count Hunyadi will not transact business on his arrival, you will have to await his convenience. Perhaps the interval could be profitably passed in Transylvania, where, it is said, the oak-bark is both cheap and good. See to this, if opportunity serves. Bieli's book and maps are worth consulting."

If I read this epistle once, I read it fifty times, but I will not pretend to say with what strange emotions. All the dry reference to business I could bear well enough, but the little passing sneer at what she called my ethnology piqued me painfully. Why should she have taken such pains to tell me that nothing that did not lend itself to gain could have

any interest for her? or was it to say that these topics alone were what should be discussed between us? Was it to recall me to my station, to make me remember in what relation I stood to her, she wrote thus? These were not the natures I had read of in Balzac! the creatures all passion and soul and sentiment, — women whose atmosphere was positive enchantment, and whose least glance or word or gesture would inflame the heart to very madness; and yet was it not in Sara to become all this? Were those deep lustrous eyes, that looked away into space longingly, dreamfully, dazingly, — were they meant to pore over wearisome columns of dry arithmetic, or not rather to give back in recognition what they had got in rapture, and to look as they were looked into?

Was it, as a Jewess, that my speculations about race had offended her? Had I expressed myself carelessly or ill? I had often been struck by a smile she would give, — not scornful, nor slighting, but something that seemed to say, “These thoughts are not *our* thoughts, nor are these ways our ways!” but in her silent fashion she would make no remark, but be satisfied to shadow forth some half dissent by a mere trembling of the lip.

She had passed a day at Abazzia — of course, alone — wandering about that delicious spot, and doubtless recalling memories for any one of which I had given my life's blood. And would she not bestow a word — one word — on these? Why not say she as much as remembered me; that it was there we first met! Sure, so much might have been said, or at least hinted at, in all harmlessness! I had done nothing, written nothing, to bring rebuke upon me. I had taken no liberty; I had tried to make the dry detail of a business letter less wearisome by a little digression, not wholly out of *apropos*; that was all.

Was then the Hebrew heart bent sorely on gain? And yet what grand things did the love of these women inspire in olden times, and what splendid natures were theirs! How true and devoted, how self-sacrificing! Sara's beautiful face, in all its calm loveliness, rose before me as I thought these things, and I felt that I loved her more than ever.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN HUNGARY.

It still wanted several weeks of Christmas, and so I hastened off to Pesth and tried to acquire some little knowledge of Hungarian, and some acquaintance with the habits and ways of Hungarian life. I am not sure that I made much progress in anything but the *csardas*, — the national dance, — in which I soon became a proficient. Its stately solemnity suddenly changing for a lively movement; its warlike gestures and attitudes; its haughty tramp and defiant tone; and, last of all, its whirlwind impetuosity and passion, — all emblems of the people who practise it, — possessed a strange fascination for me; and I never missed a night of those public balls where it was danced.

Towards the middle of December, however, I bethought me of my mission, and set out for Gross Wardein, which lay a long distance off, near the Transylvanian frontier. I had provided myself with one of the wicker carriages of the country, and travelled post, usually having three horses harnessed abreast; or, where there was much uphill, a team of five.

I mention this, for I own that the exhilaration of speeding along at the stretching gallop of these splendid *juckers*, tossing their wild names madly, and ringing out their myriads of bells, was an ecstasy of delight almost maddening. Over and over, as the excited driver would urge his beasts to greater speed by a wild shrill cry, have I yelled out in concert with him, carried away by an intense excitement I could not master.

On the second day of the journey we left the region of roads, and usually directed our course by some church spire or tower in the distance, or followed the bank of a river, when not too devious. This headlong swoop across fields and prairies, dashing madly on in what seemed utter reck-

lessness, was glorious fun; and when we came to cross the small bridges which span the streams, without rail or parapet at either side, and where the deviation of a few inches would have sent us headlong into the torrent beneath, I felt a degree of blended terror and delight such as one experiences in the mad excitement of a fox-hunt.

On the third morning I discovered, on awaking, that a heavy fall of snow had occurred during the night, and we were forced to take off our wheels and place the carriage on sledge-slides. This alone was wanting to make the enjoyment perfect, and our pace from this hour became positively steeple-chasing. Lying back in my ample fur mantle, and my hands enclosed in a fur muff, I accepted the salutations of the villagers as we swept along, or blandly raised my hand to my cap as some wearied guard would hurriedly turn out to present arms to a supposed "magnate;" for we were long out of the beat of usual travel, and rarely any but some high official of the State was seen to come "extra post," as it is called, through these wild regions.

Up to Izarous the country had been a plain, slightly, but very slightly, undulating. Here, however, we got amongst the mountains, and the charm of scenery was now added to the delight of the pace. On the fifth day I learned, and not without sincere regret, that we were within seven German miles — something over thirty of ours — from Gross Wardein, from which the Hunyadi Schloss only lay about fifty miles.

Up to this I had been, to myself at least, a *grand seigneur* travelling for his pleasure, careless of cost, and denying himself nothing; splendid generosity, transmitted from each postilion to his successor, secured me the utmost speed his beasts could master, and the impetuous dash with which we spun into the arched doorways of the inns, routed the whole household, and not unfrequently summoned the guests themselves to witness the illustrious arrival. A few hours more and the grand illusion would dissolve! No more the wild stretching gallop, cutting the snowdrift; no more the clear bells, ringing through the frosty air; no more the eager landlord bustling to the carriage-side with his flagon of heated wine; no more that burning delight imparted by speed, a sense of power that actually intoxicates. Not

one of these! A few hours more and I should be Herr Owen, travelling for the house of Hodnig and Oppovich, banished to the company of bagmen, and reduced to a status where whatever life has of picturesque or graceful is made matter for vulgar sarcasm and ridicule. I know well, ye gentlemen who hold a station fixed and unassailable will scarcely sympathize with me in all this; but the castle-builders of this world — and, happily, they are a large class — will lend me all their pity, well aware that so long as imagination honors the drafts upon her, the poor man is never bankrupt, and that it is only as illusions dissolve he sees his insolvency.

I reached Gross Wardein to dinner, and passed the night there, essaying, but with no remarkable success, to learn something of Count Hunyadi, his habits, age, temper, and general demeanor. As my informants were his countrymen, I could only gather that his qualities were such as Hungarians held in esteem. He was proud, brave, costly in his mode of life, splendidly hospitable, and a thorough sportsman. As to what he might prove in matters of business, if he would even stoop to entertain such at all, none could say; the very thought seemed to provoke a laugh.

"I once attempted a deal with him," said an old farmer-like man at the fireside. "I wanted to buy a team of *juckers* he drove into the yard here, and was rash enough to offer five hundred florins for what he asked eight. He did not even vouchsafe me an answer, and almost drove over me the next day as I stood at the side of the gate there."

"That was like Tassilo," said a Hungarian, with flashing eyes.

"He served you right," cried another. "None but a German would have offered him such a rudeness."

"Not but he's too ready with his heavy whip," muttered an old soldier-like fellow. "He might chance to strike where no words would efface the welt."

Stories of Hunyadi's extravagance and eccentricity now poured in on all sides. How he had sold an estate to pay the cost of an imperial visit that lasted a week; how he had driven a team of four across the Danube on the second day of the frost, when a heavy man could have smashed the ice

by a stamp of his foot; how he had killed a boar in single combat, though it cost him three fingers of his left hand, and an awful flesh wound in the side; and numberless other feats of daring and recklessness were recorded by admiring narrators, who finished by a loud *Elyen* to his health.

I am not sure that I went away to my bed feeling much encouraged at the success of my mission, or very hopeful of what I should do with this magnate of Hungary.

By daybreak I was again on the road. The journey led through a wild mountain pass, and was eminently interesting and picturesque; but I was no longer so open to enjoyment as before, and serious thoughts of my mission now oppressed me, and I grew more nervous and afraid of failure. If this haughty Graf were the man they represented him, it was just as likely he would refuse to listen to me at all; nor was the fact a cheering one that my client was a Jew, since nowhere is the race less held in honor than in Hungary.

As day began to decline, we issued forth upon a vast plain into which a mountain spur projected like a bold promontory beside the sea. At the very extremity of this, a large mass, which might be rock, seemed to stand out against the sky. "There, — yonder," said the postilion, pointing towards it with his whip; "that is Schloss Hunyadi. There's three hours' good gallop yet before us."

A cold snowdrift borne on a wind that at times brought us to a standstill, or even drove us to seek shelter by the wayside, now set in, and I was fain to roll myself in my furs and lie snugly down on the hay in the *wagen*, where I soon fell asleep; and though we had a change of horses, and I must have managed somehow to settle with the postilion and hand him his *trink-geld*, I was conscious of nothing till awakened by the clanking sound of a great bell, when I started up and saw we had driven into a spacious courtyard in which, at an immense fire, a number of people were seated, while others bustled about, harnessing or unharnessing horses. "Here we are, Herr Graf!" cried my postilion, who called me Count in recognition of the handsome way in which I had treated his predecessor. "This is Schloss Hunyadi."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SCHLOSS HUNYADI.

WHEN I had made known my rank and quality, I was assigned a room—a very comfortable one—in one wing of the castle, and no more notice taken of me than if I had been a guest at an inn. The house was filled with visitors; but the master, with some six or seven others, was away in Transylvania boar-shooting. As it was supposed he would not return for eight or ten days, I had abundant time to look about me, and learn something of the place and the people.

Schloss Hunyadi dated from the fifteenth century, although now a single square tower was all that remained of the early building. Successive additions had been made in every imaginable taste and style, till the whole presented an enormous incongruous mass, in which fortress, farmhouse, convent, and palace struggled for the mastery, size alone giving an air of dignity to what numberless faults would have condemned as an outrage on all architecture.

If there was deformity and ugliness without, there was, however, ample comfort and space within. Above two hundred persons could be accommodated beneath the roof, and half as many more had been occasionally stowed away in the out-buildings. I made many attempts, but all unsuccessfully, to find out what number of servants the household consisted of. Several wore livery, and many—especially such as waited on guests humble as myself—were dressed in blouse, with the crest of the house embroidered on the breast; while a little army of retainers in Jäger costume, or in the picturesque dress of the peasantry, lounged about the courtyard, lending a hand to unharness or harness a team, to fetch a bucket of water, or “strap down” a beast, as some weary traveller would ride in, splashed and wayworn.

If there seemed no order or discipline anywhere, there was little confusion, and no ill humor whatever. All seemed ready to oblige; and the work of life, so far as I could see from my window, went on cheerfully and joyfully, if not very regularly or well.

If there was none of the trim propriety, or that neatness that rises to elegance, which I had seen in my father's household, there was a lavish profusion here, a boundless abundance, that, contrasted with our mode of life, made us seem almost mean and penurious. Guests came and went unceasingly, and, to all seeming, not known to any one. An unbounded hospitality awaited all comers, and of the party who supped and caroused to-night, none remained on the morrow, nor, perhaps, even a name was remembered.

It took me some days to learn this, and to know that there was nothing singular or strange in the position I occupied, living where none knew why or whence I came, or even so much as cared to inquire my name or country.

In the great hall, where we dined all together, — the distinguished guests at one end of the table, the lesser notabilities lower down, and the menials last of all, — there was ever a place reserved for sudden arrivals; and it was rare that the meal went over without some such. A hearty welcome and a cordial greeting were soon over, and the work of festivity went on as before.

I was soon given to understand that, not only I might dispose of my time how I pleased, but that every appliance to do so agreeably was at my disposal, and that I might ride or drive or shoot or sledge, just as I fancied. And though I was cautious to show that my personal pretensions were of the very humblest, this fact seemed no barrier whatever to my enjoyment of all these courteous civilities.

"We're always glad when any one will ride the *juckers*," said a Jäger to me; "they are ruined for want of exercise, and if you like three mounts a day, you shall have them."

It was a rare piece of good luck for me that I could both ride and shoot. No two accomplishments could have stood me in such request as these, and I rose immensely in the esteem of those amongst whom I sat at table when they saw

that I could sit a back-jumper and shoot a wood-pigeon on the wing.

While I thus won such humble suffrages, there was a higher applause that my heart craved and longed for. As the company — some five-and-twenty or thirty persons — who dined at the upper table withdrew after dinner, they passed into the drawing-rooms, and we saw them no more. Of the music and dancing, in which they passed the evening, we knew nothing; and we in our own way had our revels, which certainly amply contented those who had no pretensions to higher company; but this was precisely what I could not, do what I might, divest myself of. Like one of the characters of my old favorite Balzac, I yearned to be once more in the *salon*, and amongst *ces épaules blanches*, where the whole game of life is finer, where the parries are neater, and the thrusts more deadly.

An accident gave me what all my ingenuity could not have effected. A groom of the chambers came suddenly, one evening, into the hall where we all sat, to ask if any one there could play the new *csardas* called the "Stephan." It was all the rage at Pesth; but no copy of it had yet reached the far East. I had learned this while at Pesth, and had the music with me; and of course, offered my services at once. Scarcely permitted a moment to make some slight change of dress, I found myself in a handsome *salon* with a numerous company. In my first confusion I could mark little beyond the fact that most of the persons were in the national costume, the ladies wearing the laced bodices, covered with precious stones, and the men in velvet coats, with massive turquoise buttons, the whole effect being something like that of a splendid scene in a theatre.

"We are going to avail ourselves of your talent at the piano, sir," said the Countess Hunyadi, approaching me with a courteous smile. "But let me first offer you some tea."

Not knowing if fortune might ever repeat her present favor, I resolved to profit by the opportunity to the utmost; and while cautiously repressing all display, contrived to show that I was master of some three or four languages, and a person of education, generally.

Eng { "We are puzzled about your nationality, sir," said the Countess to me. "If not too great a liberty, may I ask your country?"

When I said England, the effect produced was almost magical. A little murmur of something I might even call applause ran through the room; for I had mentioned the land of all Europe dearest to the Hungarian heart, and I heard, "An Englishman! an Englishman!" repeated from mouth to mouth, in accents of kindest meaning.

"Why had I not presented myself before? Why had I not sent my name to the Countess? Why not have made it known that I was here?" and so on, were asked eagerly of me, as though my mere nationality had invested me with some special claim to attention and regard.

I had to own that my visit was a purely business one; that I had come to see and confer with the Count, and had not the very slightest pretension to expect the courtesies I was then receiving.

My performance at the piano crowned my success. I played the *csardas* with such spirit as an impassioned dancer alone can give to the measure he delights in, and two enthusiastic encores rewarded my triumph. "Adolf, you must play now, for I know the Englishman is dying to have a dance," said the gay young Countess Palfi; "and I am quite ready to be his partner." And the next moment we were whirling along in all the mad mazes of the *csardas*.

There is that amount of display in the dancing of the *csardas* that not merely invites criticism, but actually compels an outspoken admiration whenever anything like excellence accompanies the performance. My partner was celebrated for the grace and beauty of her dancing, and for those innumerable interpolations which, fancy or caprice suggesting, she could throw into the measure. To meet and respond to these by appropriate gesture, to catch the spirit of each mood, and be ready for each change, was the task now assigned me; and I need not say with what passionate ardor I threw myself into it. At one moment she would advance in proud defiance; and as I fell back in timid homage, she would turn and fly off in the wild transport of a waltz movement. Then it was mine to pursue and overtake her; and,

clasping her, whirl away, till suddenly with a bound she would free herself, again to dramatize some passing emotion, some mood of deep dejection, or of mad and exuberant delight. It was clear that she was bent on trying the resources of my ingenuity to the very last limit; and the loud plaudits that greeted my successes had evidently put her pride on the mettle. I saw this, and saw, as I thought, that the contest had begun to pique; so, taking the next opportunity she gave me to touch her hand, I dropped on one knee, and, kissing her fingers, declared myself vanquished.

A deafening cheer greeted this finale, and accompanied us as I led my partner to her seat.

It is a fortunate thing for young natures that there is no amount of praise, no quantity of flattery, ever palls upon them. Their moral digestion is as great as their physical; and even gluttony does not seem to hurt them. Of all the flattering speeches made me on my performance, none were more cordially uttered than by my beautiful partner, who declared that if I had but the Hungarian costume, — where the clink of the spur and the jingle of the hussar equipment blend with the time, — my *csardas* was perfection.

Over and over again were regrets uttered that the Empress, who had seen the dance at Pesth done by timid and unimpassioned dancers, and who had, in consequence, carried away but a faint idea of its real captivity, could have witnessed our performance; and some even began to plot how such a representation could be prepared for her Majesty's next visit to Hungary. While they thus talked, supper was announced; and as the company were marshalling themselves into the order to move forward, I took the opportunity to slip away unnoticed to my room, well remembering that my presence there was the result of accident, and that nothing but a generous courtesy could regard me as a guest.

I had not been many minutes in my room when I heard a footstep in the corridor. I turned the key in my lock, and put out my light.

"Herr Engländer! Herr Engländer!" cried a servant's voice, as a sharp knocking shook the door. I made no reply, and he retreated.

It was clear to me that an invitation had been sent after me; and this thought filled the measure of my self-gratulation, and I drew nigh my fire, to sit and weave the pleasantest fancies that had crossed my mind for many a long day.

I waited for some time, sitting by the firelight, and then relit my lamp. I had a long letter to write to Mademoiselle Sara; for up to then I had said nothing of my arrival, nor given any account of the Schloss Hunyadi.

Had my task been simply to record my life and my impressions of those around me at Hunyadi, nothing could well have been much easier. My few days there had been actually crammed with those small and pleasant incidents which tell well in gossiping correspondence. It was all, too, so strange, so novel, so picturesque, that, to make an effective tableau of such a life, was merely to draw on memory.

There was a barbaric grandeur, on the whole, in the vast building; its crowds of followers, its hordes of retainers who came and went, apparently at no bidding but their own; in the ceaseless tide of travellers who, hospited for the night, went their way on the morrow, no more impressed by the hospitality, to all seeming, than by a thing they had their own valid right to. Details there were of neglect and savagery, that even an humble household might have been ashamed of, but these were lost — submerged, as it were — in that ocean of boundless extravagance and cost, and speedily lost sight of.

It was now my task to tell Sara all this, colored by the light — a warm light, too — of my own enjoyment of it. I pictured the place as I saw it on the night I came, and told how I could not imagine for a while in what wild region I found myself; I narrated the way in which I was assigned my place in this strange world, with Ober-jägers and Unter-jägers for my friends, who mounted me and often accompanied me in my rides; how I had seen the vast territories from hill-tops and eminences which pertained to the great Count, boundless plains that in summer would have been waving with yellow corn, and far-stretching woods of oak or pine lost in the long distance; and, last of all, coming down to the very moment I was writing, I related the incident by

which I had been promoted to the society of the castle, and how I had passed my first evening.

My pen ran rapidly along as I told of the splendors and magnificence of the scene, and of a company whose brilliant costume filled up the measure of the enchantment. "They pass and repass before me, in all their gorgeous bravery, as I write; the air vibrates with the music, and unconsciously my foot keeps time with the measure of that *csardas*, that spins and whirls before me till my brain reels with a mad intoxication."

It was only when I read over what I had written, that I became aware of the questionable taste of recording these things to one who, perhaps, was to read them after a day of heavy toil or a sleepless night of watching. What will she think of me, thought I, if it be thus I seem to discharge the weighty trust confided to me? Was it to mingle in such revelries I came here, or will she deem that these follies are the fitting prelude to a grave and difficult negotiation? For a moment I had half determined to throw my letter in the fire, and limit myself simply to saying that I had arrived, and was awaiting the Count's return! but my pride, or rather my vanity, carried the day; I could not repress the delight I felt to be in a society I clung to by so many interesting ties, and to show that here I was in my true element, — here breathing the air that was native to me.

"I am not to be supposed to forget," I wrote, "that it was not for these pleasures you sent me here, for I bear well in mind why I have come, and what I have to do. Count Hunyadi is, however, absent, and will not return before the end of the week, by which time I fully hope that I shall have assured such a position here as will mainly contribute to my ability to serve you. I pray you, therefore, to read this letter by the light of the assurance I now give, and though I may seem to lend myself too easily to pleasure, to believe that no seductions of amusement, no flatteries of my self-love, shall turn me from the devotion I owe you, and from the fidelity to which I pledge my life." With this I closed my letter and addressed it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SALON.

THE morning after my *csardas* success, a valet in discreet black brought me a message from the Countess that she expected to see me at her table at dinner, and from him I learned the names and rank of the persons I had met the night before. They were all of that high noblesse which in Hungary assumes a sort of family prestige, and by frequent intermarriage really possesses many of the close familiar interests of the family. Austrians, or indeed Germans from any part, are rarely received in these intimate gatherings, and I learned with some surprise that the only strangers were an English "lord" and his countess — so the man styled them — who were then amongst the guests. "The Lord" was with the Count on the shooting excursion; my Lady being confined to her room by a heavy cold she had caught out sledging.

Shall I be misunderstood if I own that I was very sorry to hear that an Englishman and a man of title was amongst the company? Whatever favor foreigners might extend to any small accomplishments I could lay claim to, I well knew would not compensate in my countryman's eyes for my want of station. In my father's house I had often had occasion to remark that while Englishmen freely admitted the advances of a foreigner, and accepted his acquaintance with a courteous readiness, with each other they maintained a cold and studied reserve; as though no difference of place or circumstance was to obliterate that insular code which defines class, and limits each man to the exact rank he belongs to.

When they shall see, therefore, thought I, how my titled countryman will treat me, — the distance at which he will hold

me, and the measured firmness with which he will repel, not my familiarities, for I should not dare them, but simply the ease of my manner, — these foreigners will be driven to regard me as some ignoble upstart who has no pretension whatever to be amongst them. I was very unwilling to encounter this humiliation. It was true I was not sailing under false colors. I had assumed no pretensions from which I was now to retreat. I had nothing to disown or disavow; but still I was about to be the willing guest of a society, to a place in which in my own country I could not have the faintest pretension; and it was just possible that my countryman might bring this fact before me.

He might do worse, — he might question me as to who and what I was; nor was I very sure how my tact or my temper might carry me through such an ordeal.

Would it not be wiser and better for me to avoid this peril? Should I not spare myself much mortification and much needless pain? Thus thinking, I resolved to wait on the Countess at once, and explain frankly why I felt obliged to decline the gracious courtesy she had extended to me, and refuse an honor so full of pleasure and of pride.

She was not alone as I entered, — the Countess Palfi was with her, — and I scarcely knew how to approach my theme in presence of a third person. With a bold effort, however, I told what I had come for; not very collectedly, indeed, nor perhaps very intelligibly, but in such a way as to convey that I had not courage to face what might look at least like a false position, and was almost sure to entail all the unpleasant relations of such. "In fact, Madam," said I, "I am nobody; and in my country men of rank never associate with nobodies, even by an accident. My Lord would not forgive you for throwing him into such acquaintanceship, and I should never forgive myself for having caused you the unpleasantness. I don't imagine I have made my meaning very clear."

"You have certainly made me very uncomfortable," broke in Countess Hunyadi, thoughtfully. "I thought that we Hungarians had rather strict notions on these subjects, but these of your country leave them miles behind."

"And are less reasonable, besides," said the Palfi, "since your nobility is being continually recruited from so rich a bourgeoisie."

"At all events," cried the Countess, suddenly, "we are here at Schloss Hunyadi, and I am its mistress. I invite you to dine with me; it remains for you to decide how you treat my invitation."

"Put in that way, Madam, I accept with deference;" and I bowed deeply and moved towards the door. The ladies acknowledged my salute in silence, and I fancied with coldness, and I retired.

I was evidently mistaken in attributing coldness to their manner; the ladies received me when I appeared at dinner with a marked cordiality. I sat next Madame Palfi, who talked to me like an old friend, told me who the various people at table were, and gave me great pleasure by saying that I was sure to become a favorite with Count Hunyadi, who delighted in gayety, and cherished all those that promoted it. Seeing what interest I took in the ways of Hungarian life, she explained many of the customs I saw around me, which, deriving from a great antiquity, were doubtless soon destined to give way before the advance of a higher civilization. I asked what she knew of the English guests. It was nothing, or next to nothing, — Count Hunyadi had made their acquaintance at Baden that summer, and invited them to pass their Christmas with him. Countess Palfi had herself arrived since they came, and had not seen them; for "my Lord," as he was generally called, had left at once to join the shooting-party, and my Lady had not appeared since the day after her arrival. "I only know that she is a great beauty, and of most charming manners. The men all rave of her, so that we are half jealous already. We were expecting to see her at dinner to-day, but we hear that she is less well than yesterday."

"Do you know their name?"

"No; I believe I heard it, — but I am not familiar with English names, and it has escaped me; but I will present you by and by to Count George Szechenyi, who was at Baden when the Hunyadi met them, — he'll tell you more of them."

I assured her that my curiosity was most amply satisfied already. It was a class in which I could not expect to find an acquaintance, far less a friend.

"There is something almost forced in this humility of yours," cried she. "Are we to find out some fine morning that you are a prince in disguise?" She laughed so merrily at her own conceit that Madame Hunyadi asked the cause of her mirth.

"I will tell you later on," said she. We soon afterwards rose to go into the drawing-room, and I saw as they laughed together that she had told her what she said.

"Do you know," said the Countess Hunyadi, approaching me, "I am half of Madame Palfi's mind, and I shall never rest till you reveal your secret to us?"

I said something laughingly about my *incognito* being the best coat in my wardrobe, and the matter dropped. That night I sang several times, alone, and in duet with the Palfi, and was overwhelmed with flatteries of my "fresh tenor voice" and my "admirable method." It was something so new and strange to me to find myself the centre of polite attentions, and of those warm praises which consummate good breeding knows how to bestow without outraging taste, that I found it hard to repress the wild delight that possessed me.

If I had piqued their curiosity to find out who or what I was, I had also stimulated my own ambition to astonish them.

"He says he will ride out with me to-morrow, and does n't care if I give him a lively mount," said one, speaking of me.

"And you mean to gratify him, George?" asked another.

"He shall have the roan that hoisted you out of the saddle with his hind quarters."

"Come, come, gentlemen, I'll not have my *protégé* injured to gratify your jealousies," said Madame Hunyadi; "he shall be my escort."

"If he rides as he plays billiards, you need not be much alarmed about him. The fellow can do what he likes at the cannon game."

"I'd give fifty Naps to know his history," cried another.

I was playing chess as he said this, and, turning my head quietly around, I said, "The secret is not worth half the money, sir; and if it really interests you, you shall have it for the asking."

He muttered out a mass of apologies and confused excuses, to all the embarrassment of which I left him most pitilessly, and the incident ended. I saw, however, enough to perceive that if I had won the suffrages of the ladies, the men of the party had conceived an undisguised dislike of me, and openly resented the favor shown me.

"What can you do with the foils, young gentleman?" whispered Szechenyi to me, as he came near.

"Pretty much as I did with you at billiards awhile ago," said I, insolently; for my blood was up, and I burned to fix a quarrel somewhere.

"Shall we try?" asked he, dryly.

"If you say without the buttons, I agree."

"Of course, I mean that."

I nodded, and he went on, —

"Come down to the riding-school by the first light to-morrow then, and I'll have all in readiness."

I gave another nod of assent, and moved away. I had enough on my hands now; for, besides other engagements, I had promised the Countess Palfi to arrange a little piece for private theatricals, and have it ready by the time of Count Hunyadi's return. So far from feeling oppressed or overwhelmed by the multiplicity of these cares, they stimulated me to a degree of excitement almost maddening. Failure somewhere seemed inevitable, and, for the life of me, I could not choose where it should be. As my spirits rose, I threw off all the reserve I had worn before, and talked away with an animation and boldness I felt uncontrollable. I made *calembourgs*, and dashed off impromptu verses at the piano; and when, culminating in some impertinence by a witty picture of the persons around me I had convulsed the whole room with laughter, I sprang up, and, saying good-night, disappeared.

The roars of their laughter followed me down the corridor, nor did they cease to ring in my ears till I had closed my door.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR MEETING.

I COULD more easily record my sensations in the paroxysm of a fever than recall how I passed that night. I am aware that I wrote a long letter to my mother, and a longer to Sara, both to be despatched in case ill befell me in my encounter. What I said to either, or how I said it, I know not.

No more can I explain why I put all my papers together in such fashion that they could be thrown into the fire at once, without leaving any, the slightest, clew to trace me by. That secret, which I had affected to hold so cheaply, did in reality possess some strange fascination for me, and I desired to be a puzzle and an enigma even after I was gone.

It wanted one short hour of dawn when I had finished; but I was still too much excited to sleep. I knew how unfavorably I should come to the encounter before me with jarred nerves and the weariness of a night's watching; but it was too late now to help that; too late, besides, to speculate on what men would say of such a causeless duel, brought on, as I could not conceal from myself, by my hot temper. By the time I had taken my cold bath my nerves became more braced, and I scarcely felt a trace of fatigue or exhaustion. The gray morning was just breaking as I stole quietly downstairs and issued forth into the courtyard. A heavy fall of snow had occurred in the night, and an unbroken expanse of billowy whiteness spread out before me, save where, from a corner of the court, some foot-tracks led towards the riding-school. I saw, therefore, that I was not the first at the tryst, and I hastened on in all speed.

Six or eight young men, closely muffled in furs, stood at the door as I came up, and gravely uncovered to me. They made way for me to pass in without speaking; and while, stamping the snow from my boots, I said something about the cold of the morning, they muttered what might mean assent or the reverse in a low half-sulky tone, that certainly little invited to further remark.

For a few seconds they talked together in whispers, and then a tall ill-favored fellow, with a deep scar from the cheek-bone to the upper lip, came abruptly up to me.

"Look here, young fellow," said he. "I am to act as your second; and though, of course, I'd like to know that the man I handled was a gentleman, I do not ask you to tell anything about yourself that you prefer to keep back. I would only say that, if ugly consequences come of this stupid business, the blame must fall upon you. Your temper provoked it, is that not true?"

I nodded assent, and he went on.

"So far, all right. The next point is this. We are all on honor that, whatever happens, not a word or a syllable shall ever escape us. Do you agree to this?"

"I agree," said I, calmly.

"Give me your hand on it."

I gave him my hand; and as he held it in his own, he said, "On the faith of a gentleman, I will never reveal to my last day what shall pass here this morning."

I repeated the words after him, and we moved on into the school.

* * * * *

I had drawn my sofa in front of the fire, and, stretching myself on it, fell into a deep dreamless sleep. A night's wakefulness, and the excitement I had gone through, had so far worked upon me that I did not hear the opening of my door, nor the tread of a heavy man as he came forward and seated himself by the fire. It was only the cold touch of his fingers on the wrist as he felt my pulse that at last aroused me.

"Don't start, don't flurry yourself," said he, calmly, to

me. "I am the doctor. I have been to see the other, and I promised to look in on you,"

"How is he? Is it serious?"

"It will be a slow affair. It was an ugly thrust,—all the dorsal muscles pierced, but no internal mischief done."

"He will certainly recover then?"

"There is no reason why he should not. But where is this scratch of yours? Let me see it."

"It is a nothing, doctor,—a mere nothing. Pray take no trouble about it."

"But I must. I have pledged myself to examine your wound; and I must keep my word."

"Surely these gentlemen are scarcely so very anxious about me," said I, in some pique. "Not one of them vouchsafed to see me safe home, though I had lost some blood, and felt very faint."

"I did not say it was these gentlemen sent me here," said he, dryly.

"Then who else knew anything about this business?"

"If you must know, then," said he, "it is the English Countess who is staying here, and whom I have been attending for the last week. How she came to hear of this affair I cannot tell you, for I know it is a secret to the rest of the house; but she made me promise to come and see you, and if there was nothing in your wound to forbid it, to bring you over to her dressing-room, and present you to her. And now let me look at the injury."

I took off my coat, and, baring my arm, displayed a very ugly thrust, which, entering above the wrist, came out between the two bones of the arm.

"Now I call this the worst of the two," said he, examining it. "Does it give you much pain?"

"Some uneasiness; nothing more. When may I see the Countess?" asked I; for an intense curiosity to meet her had now possessed me.

"If you like, you may go at once; not that I can accompany you, for I am off for a distant visit; but her rooms are at the end of this corridor, and you enter by the conservatory. Meanwhile I must bandage this arm in somewhat better fashion than you have done."

While he was engaged in dressing my wound, he rambled on about the reckless habits that made such *rencontres* possible. "We are in the middle of the seventeenth century here, with all its barbarisms," said he. "These young fellows were vexed at seeing the notice you attracted; and that was to their thinking cause enough to send you off with a damaged lung or a maimed limb. It's all well, however, as long as Graf Hunyadi does not hear of it. But if he should, he'll turn them out, every man of them, for this treatment of an Englishman."

"Then we must take care, sir, that he does not hear of it," said I, half fiercely, and as though addressing my speech especially to himself.

"Not from me, certainly," said he. "My doctor's instincts always save me from such indiscretions."

"Is our Countess young, doctor?" asked I, half jocularly.

"Young and pretty, though one might say, too, she has been younger and prettier. If you dine below stairs to-day, drink no wine, and get back to your sofa as soon as you can after dinner." With this caution he left me.

A heavy packet of letters had arrived from Fiume, containing, I surmised, some instructions for which I had written; but seeing that the address was in the cashier's handwriting, I felt no impatience to break the seal.

I dressed myself with unusual care, though the pain of my arm made the process a very slow one; and at last set out to pay my visit. I passed along the corridor, through the conservatory, and found myself at a door, at which I knocked twice. At last I turned the handle, and entered a small but handsomely furnished drawing-room, about which books and newspapers lay scattered; and a small embroidery-frame near the fire showed where she, who was engaged with that task, had lately been seated. As I bent down in some curiosity to examine a really clever copy of an altar-piece of Albert Dürer, a door gently opened, and I heard the rustle of a silk dress. I had not got time to look round when, with a cry, she rushed towards me, and clasped me in her arms. It was Madame Cleremont!

"My own dear, dear Digby!" she cried, as she kissed me over face and forehead, smoothing back my hair to look at me, and then falling again on my neck. "I knew it could be no other when I heard of you, darling; and when they told me of your singing, I could have sworn it was yourself."

I tried to disengage myself from her embrace, and summoned what I could of sternness to repel her caresses. She dropped at my feet, and, clasping my hands, implored me, in accents broken with passion, to forgive her. To see her who had once been all that a mother could have been to me in tenderness and care, who watched the long hours of the night beside my sick-bed, — to see her there before me, abject, self-accused, and yet entreating forgiveness, was more than I could bear. My nerves, besides, had been already too tensely strung; and I burst into a passion of tears that totally overcame me. She sat with her arm round me, and wept.

With a wild hysterical rapidity she poured forth a sort of excuse of her own conduct. She recalled all that I had seen her suffer of insult and shame; the daily outrages passed upon her; the slights which no woman can or ought to pardon. She spoke of her friendlessness, her misery; but, more than all, her consuming desire to be avenged on the man who had degraded her. "Your father, I knew, was the man to do me this justice," she cried; "he did not love me, nor did I love him; but we both hated this wretch, and it seemed little to me what became of me, if I could but compass his ruin."

I scarcely followed her. I bethought me of my poor mother, for whom none had a thought, neither of the wrongs done her, nor of the sufferings to which she was so remorselessly consigned.

"You do not listen to me. You do not hear me," cried she, passionately; "and yet who has been your friend as I have? Who has implored your father to be just towards you as I have done? Who has hazarded her whole future in maintaining your rights, — who but I?" In a wild rhapsody of mingled passion and appeal she went on to show how Sir Roger insisted on presenting her everywhere as his wife.

Even at courts she had been so presented, though all the terrible consequences of exposure were sure to ring over the whole of Europe. The personal danger of the step was a temptation too strong to resist; and the altercation and vindication that must follow were ecstasy to him. He was putting himself against the world, and he would back himself on the issue.

"And, here, where we are now," cried I, "what is to happen if to-morrow some stranger should arrive from England who knows your story, and feels he owes it to his host to proclaim it?"

"Is it not too clear what is to happen?" shrieked she; "blood, more blood,—theirs or his, or both! Just as he struck a young prince at Baden with a glove across the face, because he stared at me too rudely, and shot him afterwards; his dearest tie to me is the peril that attaches to me. Do you not know him, Digby? Do you not know the insolent disdain with which he refuses to be bound by what other men submit to; and that when he has said, 'I am ready to stake my life on it,' he believes he has proved his conviction to be a just one?"

Of my father's means, or what remained to him of fortune, she knew nothing. They had often been reduced to almost want, and at other times money would flow freely in, to be wasted and lavished with that careless munificence that no experiences of privation could ever teach prudence. We now turned to speculate on what would happen when he came back from this shooting-party; how he would recognize me.

"I see," cried I: "you suspect he will disown me?"

"Not that, dear Digby," said she, in some confusion, "but he may require—that is, he may wish you to conform to some plan, some procedure of his own."

"If this should involve the smallest infraction of what is due to my mother, I'll refuse," said I, firmly, "and reject as openly as he dares to make it."

"And are you ready to face what may follow?"

"If you mean as regards myself, I am quite ready. My father threw me off years ago, and I am better able to fight the battle of life now than I was then. I ask nothing of

him, — not even his name. If you speak of other consequences, — of what may ensue when his hosts shall learn the fraud he has practised on them — ” It was only as the fatal word fell from me that I felt how cruelly I had spoken, and I stopped and took her hand in mine, saying, “ Do not be angry with me, dear friend, that I have spoken a bitter word ; bear with me for *her* sake, who has none to befriend her but myself.”

She made me no answer, but looked out cold and stern into vacancy, her pale features motionless, not a line or lineament betraying what was passing within her.

“ Why remain here then to provoke a catastrophe ? ” cried she, suddenly. “ If you have come for pleasure, you see enough to be aware there is little more awaiting you.”

“ I have not come for pleasure. I am here to confer with Count Hunyadi on a matter of business.”

“ And will some paltry success in a little peddling contract for the Count’s wine or his olives or his Indian corn compensate you for the ruin you may bring on your father ? Will it recompense you if his blood be shed ? ”

There was a tone of defiant sarcasm in the way she spoke these words that showed me, if I would not yield to her persuasions, she would not hesitate to employ other means of coercion. Perhaps she mistook the astonishment my face expressed for terror ; for she went on : “ It would be well that you thought twice over it ere you make your breach with your father irreparable. Remember, it is not a question of a passing sentimentality or a sympathy, it is the whole story of your life is at issue, — if you be anything, or anybody, or a nameless creature, without belongings or kindred.”

I sat for some minutes in deep thought. I was not sure whether I understood her words, and that she meant to say it lay entirely with my father to own or disown me, as he pleased. She seemed delighted at my embarrassment, and her voice rung out with its own clear triumphant cadence, as she said, “ You begin at last to see how near the precipice you have been straying.”

“ One moment, Madam,” cried I. “ If my mother be Lady Norcott, Sir Roger cannot disown me ; not to say

that already, in an open court, he has maintained his right over me and declared me his son."

"You are opening a question I will not touch, Digby," said she, gravely, — "your mother's marriage. I will only say that the ablest lawyers your father has consulted pronounce it more than questionable."

"And my father has then entertained the project of an attempt to break it."

"This is not fair," cried she, eagerly; "you lead me on from one admission to another, till I find myself revealing confidences to one who at any moment may avow himself my enemy."

I raised my eyes to her face, and she met my glance with a look cold, stern, and impassive, as though she would say, "Choose your path now, and accept me as friend or foe."

All the winning softness of her manner, all those engaging coquetries of look and gesture, of which none was more mistress, were gone, and another and a very different nature had replaced them.

This, then, was one of those women all tenderness and softness and fascination, but who behind this mask have the fierce nature of the tigress. Could she be the same I had seen so submissive under all the insolence of her brutal husband, bearing his scoffs and his sarcasms without a word of reply? Was it that these cruelties had at last evoked this stern spirit, and that another temperament had been generated out of a nature broken down and demoralized by ill treatment?

"Shall I tell you what I think you ought to do?" asked she, calmly. I nodded assent. "Sit down there, then," continued she, "and write these few lines to your father, and let him have them before he returns here."

"First of all, I cannot write just now; I have had a slight accident to my right arm."

"I know," said she, smiling dubiously. "You hurt it in the riding-school; but it's a mere nothing, is it not?"

I made a gesture of assent, not altogether pleased the while at the little sympathy she vouchsafed me, and the insignificance she ascribed to my wound.

"Shall I write for you, then? you can sign it afterwards."

"Let me first know what you would have me say,"

"Dear father — You always addressed him that way?"

"Yes."

"Dear father, — I have been here some days, awaiting Count Hunyadi's return to transact some matters of business with him, and have by a mere accident learned that you are amongst his guests. As I do not know how, to what extent, or in what capacity it may be your pleasure to recognize me, or whether it might not chime better with your convenience to ignore me altogether, I write now to submit myself entirely to your will and guidance, being in this, as in all things, your dutiful and obedient son."

The words came from her pen as rapidly as her fingers could move across the paper; and as she finished, she pushed it towards me, saying, —

"There — put 'Digby Norcott' there, and it is all done!"

"This is a matter to think over," said I, gravely. "I may be compromising other interests than my own by signing this."

"Those Jews of yours have imbued you well with their cautious spirit, I see," said she, scoffingly.

"They have taught me no lessons I am ashamed of, Madam," said I, reddening with anger.

"I declare I don't know you as the Digby of long ago! I fancied I did, when I heard those ladies coming upstairs each night, so charmed with all your graceful gifts, and so eloquent over all your fascinations; and now, as you stand there, word-splitting and phrase-weighting, canvassing what it might cost you to do this or where it would lead you to say that, I ask myself, Is this the boy of whom his father said, 'Above all things he shall be a gentleman'?"

"To one element of that character, Madam, I will try and preserve my claim, — no provocation shall drive me to utter a rudeness to a lady."

"This is less breeding than calculation, young gentleman. I read such natures as yours as easily as a printed book."

"I ask nothing better, Madam; my only fear would be that you should mistake me, and imagine that any deference to my father's views would make me forget my mother's rights."

"So then," cried she, with a mocking laugh, "you have got your courage up so far, — you dare me! Be advised, however, and do not court such an unequal contest. I have but to choose in which of a score of ways I could crush you, — do you mark me? crush you! You will not always be as lucky as you were this morning in the riding-school."

"Great heaven!" cried I, "was this, then, of *your* devising?"

"You begin to have a glimpse of whom you have to deal with? Go back to your room and reflect on that knowledge, and if it end in persuading you to quit this place at once, and never return to it, it will be a wise resolve."

I was too much occupied with the terrible fact that she had already conspired against my life to heed her words of counsel, and I stood there stunned and confused.

In the look of scorn and hate she threw on me, she seemed to exult over my forlorn and bewildered condition.

"I scarcely think there is any need to prolong this interview," said she, at last, with an easy smile; "each of us is by this time aware of the kindly sentiments of the other; is it not so?"

"I am going, Madam," I stammered out; "good-bye."

She made a slight movement, as I thought, towards me; but it was in reality the prelude to a deep courtesy, while in her sweetest of accents she whispered, "*Au revoir, Monsieur Digby, au revoir.*" I bowed deeply and withdrew.

CHAPTER XXX.

HASTY TIDINGS.

OF all the revulsions of feeling that can befall the heart, I know of none to compare in poignant agony with the sudden consciousness that you are hated where once you were loved; that where once you had turned for consolation or sympathy you have now nothing to expect but coldness and distrust; that the treasure of affection on which you have counted against the day of adversity had proved bankrupt, and nothing remained of all its bright hopes and promises but bitter regrets and sorrowful repinings.

It was in the very last depth of this spirit I now locked myself in my room to determine what I should do, by what course I should shape my future. I saw the stake for which Madame Cleremont was playing. She had resolved that my mother's marriage should be broken, and she herself declared Lady Norcott. That my father might be brought to accede to such a plan was by no means improbable. Its extravagance and its enormity would have been great inducements, had he no other interest in the matter.

I began to canvass with myself how persons poor and friendless could possibly meet the legal battle which this question should originate, and how my mother, in her destitution and poverty, could contend against the force of the wealth that would be opposed to her. It had only been by the united efforts of her relatives and friends, all eager to support her in such a cause, that she had been enabled to face the expenses of the suit my father had brought on the question of my guardianship. How could she again sustain a like charge? Was it likely that her present condition would enable her to fee leaders on circuit and bar magnates,

to pay the costs of witnesses, and all the endless outgoings of the law?

So long as I lived, I well knew my poor mother would compromise none of the rights that pertained to me; but if I could be got rid of, — and the event of the morning shot through my mind, — some arrangement with her might not be impossible, — at least, it was open to them to think so; and I could well imagine that they would build on such a foundation. It was not easy to imagine a woman like Madame Cleremont, a person of the most attractive manners, beautiful, gifted, and graceful, capable of a great crime; but she herself had shown me more than once in fiction the portraiture of an individual who, while shrinking with horror from the coarse contact of guilt, would willingly set the springs in motion which ultimately conduce to the most appalling disasters. I remember even her saying to me one day, "It is in watching the terrible explosions their schemes have ignited, that cowards learn to taste what they fancy to be the ecstasy of courage."

While I thought what a sorry adversary I should prove against such a woman, with all the wiles of her nature, and all the seductions by which she could display them, my eyes fell upon the packet from Fiume, which still lay with its seal unbroken. I broke it open half carelessly. It contained an envelope marked "Letters," and the following note: —

"HERR OWEN, — With this you are informed that the house of Hodnig and Oppovich has failed, dockets of bankruptcy having been yesterday declared against that firm; the usual assignees will be duly appointed by the court to liquidate, on such terms as the estate permits. Present liabilities are currently stated as below eight millions of florins. Actual property will not meet half that sum.

"Further negotiations regarding the Hunyadi contract on your part are consequently unnecessary, seeing that the most favorable conditions you could obtain would in no wise avert or even lessen the blow that has fallen on the house.

"I am directed to enclose you by bill the sum of two hundred and eighteen florins twenty-seven kreutzers, which at the current exchange will pay your salary to the end of the present quarter, and also to state that, having duly acknowledged the receipt of this sum to me by letter, you are to consider yourself free of all engagement

to the house. I am also instructed to say that your zeal and probity will be duly attested when any reference is addressed to the managers of this estate.

"I am, with accustomed esteem and respect,

"Your devoted servant,

"JACOB ULRICH.

"P. S. Herr Ignaz is, happily for him, in a condition that renders him unconscious of his calamity. The family has retired for the present to the small cottage near the gate of the Abazzia Villa, called 'Die Hütte,' but desires complete privacy, and declines all condolences. — J. U.

"2nd P. S. The enclosed letters have arrived here during your absence."

So intensely imbued was my mind with suspicion and distrust, that it was not till after long and careful examination I satisfied myself that this letter was genuine, and that its contents might be taken as true. The packet it enclosed would, however, have resolved all doubt; they were three letters from my dear mother. Frequent reference was made to other letters which had never reached me, and in which it was clear the mode in which she had learned my address was explained. She also spoke of Sara as of one she knew by correspondence, and gave me to understand how she was following every little humble incident of my daily life with loving interest and affection. She enjoined me by all means to devote myself heartily and wholly to those who had befriended me so generously, and to merit the esteem of that good girl, who, caring nothing for herself, gave her heart and soul to the service of her father.

"I have told you so much," said she, "of myself in former letters" (these I never saw) "that I shall not weary you with more. You know why I gave up the school, and through what reasonings I consented to call myself Lady Norcott, though in such poverty as mine the assumption of a title only provoked ridicule. Mr. McBride, however, persuaded me that a voluntary surrender of my position might be made terrible use of against me, should — what I cannot believe — the attempt ever be made to question the legality of my marriage with your father.

"It has been so constantly repeated, however, that Sir

Roger means to marry this lady, — some say they are already married, — that I have had careful abstracts made of the registry, and every detail duly certified which can establish your legitimacy, — not that I can bring myself to believe your father would ever raise that question. Strangely enough, my allowance, left unpaid for several years, was lately resumed, and Foster and Wall received orders to acknowledge my drafts on them, for what, I concluded, were meant to cover all the arrears due. As I had already tided over these years of trial and pressure, I refused all save the sum due for the current year, and begged to learn Sir Roger's address that I might write to him. To this they replied 'that they had no information to give me on the subject; that their instructions, as regarded payments to me, came to them from the house of Rödiger, in Frankfort, and in the manner and terms already communicated to me,' — all showing me that the whole was a matter of business, into which no sentiment was to enter, or be deemed capable of entering."

It was about this period my mother came to learn my address, and she avowed that all other thoughts and cares were speedily lost in the whirlpool of joy these tidings swept around her. Her eagerness to see me grew intense, but was tempered by the fear lest her selfish anxiety might prejudice me in that esteem I had already won from my employers, of whom, strangely enough, she spoke freely and familiarly, as though she had known them.

The whole tone of these letters — and I read them over and over — calmed and reassured me. Full of personal details, they were never selfish in its unpleasant sense. They often spoke of poverty, but rather as a thing to be baffled by good-humored contrivance or rendered endurable by habit than as matter for complaint and bewailment. Little dashes of light-heartedness would now and then break the dark sombreness of the picture, and show how her spirit was yet alive to life and its enjoyments. Above all, there was no croaking, no foreboding. She had lived through some years of trial and sorrow, and if the future had others as gloomy in store, it was time enough when they came to meet their exigencies.

What a blessing was it to me to get these at such a time! I no longer felt myself alone and isolated in the world. There was, I now knew, a bank of affection at my disposal at which I could draw at will; and what an object for my imitation was that fine courage of hers, that took defeats as mere passing shadows, and was satisfied to fight on to the end, ever hopeful and ever brave.

How I would have liked to return to Madame Cleremont, and read her some passages of these letters, and said, "And this is the woman you seek to dethrone, and whose place you would fill! This is she whose rival you aspire to be. What think you of the contest now? Which of you should prove the winner? Is it with a nature like this you would like to measure yourself?"

How I would have liked to have dared her to such a combat, and boldly declared that I would make my father himself the umpire as to the worthier. As to her hate or her vengeance, she had as much as promised me both, but I defied them; and I believed I even consulted my safety by open defiance. As I thus stimulated myself with passionate counsels, and burned with eagerness for the moment I might avow them, I flung open my window for fresh air, for my excitement had risen to actual fever.

It was very dark without. Night had set in about two hours, but no stars had yet shone out, and a thick impenetrable blackness pervaded everywhere. Some peasants were shovelling the snow in the court beneath, making a track from the gate to the house-door, and here and there a dimly burning lantern attached to a pole would show where the work was being carried out. As it was about the time of the evening when travellers were wont to arrive, the labor was pressed briskly forward, and I could hear an overseer's voice urging the men to increased zeal and activity.

"There has been a snow-mountain fallen at Miklos, they say," cried one, "and none can pass the road for many a day."

"If they cannot come from Pesth, they can come from Hermanstadt, from Temesvar, from Klausenberg. Guests can come from any quarter," cried the overseer.

I listened with amusement to the discussion that followed;

the various sentiments they uttered as to whether this system of open hospitality raised the character of a country, or was not a heavy mulct out of the rights which the local poor possessed on the properties of their rich neighbors.

"Every flask of Tokayer drunk at the upper table," cried one, "is an eimer of Mediasch lost to the poor man."

"That is the true way to look at it," cried another. "We want neither Counts nor Tokayer."

"That was a Saxon dog barked there!" called out the overseer. "No Hungarian ever reviled what his land is most famed for."

"Here come travellers now," shouted one from the gate. "I hear horses at full speed on the Klausenberg road."

"Lanterns to the gate, and stand free of the road," cried the overseer; and now the scene became one of striking excitement, as the lights flitted rapidly from place to place; the great arch of the gate being accurately marked in outline, and the deep cleft in the snow lined on either side by lanterns suspended between posts.

"They're coming at a furious pace," cried one; "they've passed the toll-bridge at full gallop."

"Then it's the Count himself," chimed in another. "There's none but he could force the toll-bar."

"It's a country wagon, with four *juckers*; and here it comes;" and as he spoke four sweating horses swung through the gateway, and came full speed into the court.

"Where is Kitzlach? Call Kitzlach! call the doctor!" screamed a voice from the wagon. "Tell him to come down at once."

"Out with the *juckers*, and harness a fresh team," cried the same voice. And now, as he descended from the wagon, he was surrounded with eager figures, all anxious to hear his tidings. As I could gather nothing from where I was, I hastily threw on a fur coat, and made my way down to the court. I soon learned the news. A terrible disaster had befallen the hunting-party. A she-boar, driven frantic by her wounds, had dashed suddenly into the midst of them, slightly wounded the Count and his head Jäger, but dangerously one of the guests, who had sustained a single combat with her and killed her; not, however, without grievous

injury to himself, for a large blood-vessel had been severed; all the efforts to stanch which had been but half successful.

"Have you your tourniquet, doctor?" cried the youth from a wagon, as the equipage was turned again to the gate.

"Everything — everything."

"You'll want any quantity of lint and bandages; and, remember, nothing can be had down yonder."

"Make your mind easy! I've forgotten nothing. Just keep your beasts quiet till I get up."

I drew nigh as he was about to mount, and whispered a word in his ear.

"I don't know," said he, gruffly. "I can't see why you should ask."

"Why don't you get up?" cried the youth, impatiently.

"There's a young fellow here importuning me to ask you for a place in the wagon. He thinks he knows this stranger."

"Let him get in at once, then; and let's have no more delays." And scarcely had we scrambled to our places, than the loud whip resounded with the quick, sharp report of pistol-shots, and the beasts sprung out at once, rushed through the narrow gateway, and were soon stretching along at their topmost pace through impenetrable blackness.

Crouching in the straw at the bottom of the wagon, I crept as closely as I could to where the doctor was seated beside the young man who drove. I was eager to hear what I could of the incident that had befallen; but, to my great disappointment, they spoke in Hungarian, and all I could gather, from certain dropping expressions, was that both the Count and his English friend had been engaged in some rivalry of personal daring, and that the calamity had come of this insane contest. "They'll never say 'Mad as a Hunyadi' any longer up at Lees. They'll say 'Mad as an Englishman.'"

The young fellow spoke in wondrous admiration of the wounded man's courage and coolness, and described how he had taught them to pass a light ligature round his thigh, and tighten it further by inserting a stick to act as a screw. "Up to that," said he, "he had been bleeding like a tapped

Wein-fass; and then he made them give him large goblets of strong Bordeaux, to sustain him."

"He's a bold-hearted fellow then?" said the doctor.

"The Count declares he has never met his equal. They were alone together when I started, for the Englishman said he had something for the Count's own ear, and begged the others to withdraw."

"So he thought himself in danger?"

"That he did. I saw him myself take off a large signet ring and lay it on the table beside his watch, and he pointed them out to Hunyadi as he came in, and said something in English; but the Count rejoined quickly, 'No, no. It's not come to that yet.'"

While they spoke slowly, I was able to gather at least the meaning of what passed between them, but I lost all clew so soon as they talked eagerly and rapidly, so that, confused by the unmeaning sounds, and made drowsy by the fresh night-air, I at last fell off into a heavy sleep.

I was awakened by the noise of the wheels over a paved street. I looked up, and saw, by the struggling light of a breaking dawn, that we were in a village where a number of people were awaiting us. "Have you brought the doctor?" "Where is the doctor?" cried several together; and he was scarcely permitted to descend, so eager were they to seize and carry him off.

A dense crowd was gathered before the door of a small two-storied house, into which the doctor now disappeared; and I, mixing with the mass, tried as best I might, to ask how the wounded man was doing, and what hopes there were of his life. While I thus went from one to another vainly endeavoring to make my question intelligible, I heard a loud voice cry out in German, "Where is the young fellow who says he knows him?"

"Here," cried I, boldly. "I believe I know him, — I am almost sure I do."

"Come to the door, then, and look in; do not utter a word," cried a tall dark man I soon knew to be Count Hunyadi. "Mind, sir, for your life's sake, that you don't disturb him."

I crept on tiptoe to the slightly opened door, and looked

in. There, on a mattress on the floor, a tall man was lying, while the doctor knelt beside him, and seemed to press with all his weight on his thigh. The sick man slowly turned his face to the light, and it was my father! My knees trembled, my sight grew dim; strength suddenly forsook me, and I fell powerless and senseless to the ground.

They were bathing my face and temples with vinegar and water to rally me when the doctor came to say the sick man desired to see me. In a moment the blood rushed to my head, and I cried out, "I am ready."

"Be calm, sir. A mere word, a gesture, may prove fatal to him," whispered the doctor to me. "His life hangs on a thread."

Count Hunyadi was kneeling beside my father, and evidently trying to catch some faint words he was saying, as I stole forward and knelt down by the bedside. My father turned his eyes slowly round till they fell upon me, — when their expression suddenly changed from the look of weary apathy to a stare of full and steadfast meaning, — intense, indeed, in significance; but I dare not say that this conveyed anything like love or affection for me.

"Come closer," cried he, in a hoarse whisper. "It is Digby, is it not? This boy is my son, Hunyadi," he said, with an increased effort. "Give me your hand." He took my trembling fingers in his cold moist hand, and passed the large signet ring over my second finger. "He is my heir. Gentlemen," he cried, in a tone at once haughty and broken by debility, "my name, my title, my fortune all pass to *him*. By to-morrow you will call him Sir Digby —"

He could not finish; his lips moved without a sound. I was conscious of no more than being drawn heavily across the floor, not utterly bereft of reason, but dulled and stunned as if from the effect of a heavy blow.

When I was able, I crept back to the room. It was now the decline of day. A large white cavalry cloak covered the body. I knelt down beside it, and cried with a bursting heart till late into the night.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN SORROW.

Of what followed that night of mourning I remember but snatches and brief glimpses. There is nothing more positively torturing to the mind in sorrow than the way in which the mere excitement of grief robs the intellect of all power of perspective, and gives to the smallest, meanest incidents the prominence and force of great events. It is as though the jar given to the nervous system had untuned us for the entire world, and all things come amiss. I am sure, indeed, I know it would have been impossible to have met more gentle and considerate kindness than I now experienced on every hand, and yet I lived in a sort of feverish irritability, as though expecting each moment to have my position questioned, and my right to be there disputed.

In obedience to the custom of the country, it was necessary that the funeral should take place within forty-eight hours after death, and though all the details had been carefully looked to by the Count's orders, certain questions still should be asked of me, and my leave obtained for certain acts.

The small church of Hunyadi-Naglos was fixed on for the last resting-place. It contained the graves of eight generations of Hunyadis, and to accord a place amongst them to a stranger, and a Protestant, was deemed a high honor. Affliction seemed to have developed in me all the pride of my race, for I can recall with what sullen hauteur I heard of this concession, and rather took it as a favor accorded than accepted. An overweening sense of all that my father himself would have thought due to his memory was on me, and I tortured my mind to think that no mark of

honor he would have desired should be forgotten. As a soldier, he had a right to a soldier's funeral, and a "Honved" battalion, with their band, received orders to be present. For miles around the landed gentry and nobles poured in, with hosts of followers. Next to a death in battle, there was no such noble death as in the hunting-field, and the splendid prowess of my father's achievement had won him imperishable honor.

All was conducted as if for the funeral of a magnate of Hungary. The titles and rank of the deceased were proclaimed aloud as we entered the graveyard, and each whose station entitled him to be thought a friend came forward and kissed the pall as the body was borne in.

One part of the ceremony overcame me altogether. When the third round of musketry had rung out over the grave, a solemn pause of half a minute or so was to ensue, then the band was to burst out with the first bars of "God preserve the Emperor;" and while a wild cheer arose, I was to spring into the saddle of my father's horse, which had been led close after the coffin, and to join the cheer. This soldier declaration that death was but a passing terror, revolted me to the heart, and I over and over asserted I could not do this. They would not yield, however; they regarded my reasons as childish sentimentality, and half impugned my courage besides. I do not know why I gave in, nor am I sure I ever did yield; but when the heavy smoke of the last round slowly rose over the bier, I felt myself jerked up into the saddle of a horse that plunged wildly and struck out madly in affright. With a rider's instinct, I held my seat, and even managed the bounding animal with the hand of a practised rider. Four fearful bounds I sat unshaken, while the air rang with the hoarse cheer of some thousand voices, and then a sickness like death itself gathered over my heart, — a sense of horror, of where I was and why, came over me. My arms fell powerless to my sides, and I rolled from the saddle and fell senseless and stunned to the ground.

Without having received serious injury, I was too ill to be removed from the little village of Naglos, where I was confined to bed for ten days. The doctor remained with me

for some days, and came again and again to visit me afterwards. The chief care of me, however, devolved on my father's valet, a smart young Swiss, whom I had difficulty in believing not to be English, so perfectly did he speak our language.

I soon saw this fellow was thoroughly conversant with all my father's history, and, whether in his confidence or not, knew everything that concerned him, and understood his temperament and nature to perfection. There was much adroitness in the way in which he showed me this, without ever shocking my pride or offending my taste by any display of a supposed influence. Of his consummate tact I need give but one, — a very slight instance, it is true, but enough to denote the man. He, in addressing me as Sir Digby, remarked how the sound of my newly acquired title seemed to recall my father to my mind at once, and ever after limited himself to saying simply "sir," which attracted no attention from me.

Another instance of his address I must record also. I had got my writing-desk on the bed, and was writing to my mother, to whom I had already despatched two telegraphic messages, but as yet received no reply. "I beg pardon, sir," said La Grange, entering in his usual noiseless fashion; "but I thought you would like to know that my Lady has left Schloss Hunyadi. She took her departure last night for Pesth."

"You mean —" I faltered, not really knowing what I would say.

"Yes, sir," said he, thoroughly aware of what was passing in my mind. "She admitted no one, not even the doctor, and started at last with only a few words of adieu in writing for the Countess."

"What impression has this left? How are they speaking of her?" asked I, blurting out against my will what was working within me.

"I believe, sir," said he, with a very faint smile, "they lay it all to English ways and habits. At least I have heard no other comments than such as would apply to these."

"Be sure that you give rise to no others," said I, sternly.

"Of course not, sir. It would be highly unbecoming in me to do so."

"And greatly to your disservice besides," added I, severely.

He bowed in acquiescence, and said no more.

"How long have you served my father, La Grange?" asked I.

"About two years, sir. I succeeded Mr. Nixon, sir, who often spoke of you."

"Ah, I remember Nixon. What became of him?"

"He set up the Hôtel Victoria at Spa, sir. You know, sir, that he married, and married very well too?"

"No, I never heard of it," said I, carelessly.

"Yes, sir; he married Delorme's daughter, la belle Pauline they used to call her at Brussels."

"What, Pauline Delorme?" said I, growing crimson with I know not what feeling.

"Yes, sir, the same; and she's the size of old Pierre, her father, already: not but she's handsome still, — but such a monster!"

I cannot say with what delight I heard of her disfigurement. It was a malice that warmed my heart like some good news.

"It was Sir Roger, sir, that made the match."

"How could that be? What could he care about it?"

"Well, sir, he certainly gave Nixon five hundred pounds to go and propose for her, and promise old Pierre his patronage, if he agreed to it."

"Are you sure of this?" asked I, eagerly.

"Nixon himself told me, sir. I remember he said, 'I haven't much time to lose about it, for the tutor, Mr. Eccles, is quite ready to take her, on the same terms, and Sir Roger does n't care which of us it is.'"

"Nor the lady either, apparently," said I, half angrily.

"Of course not. Pauline was too well brought up for that."

I was not going to discuss this point of ethics with Mr. La Grange, and soon fell off into a vein of reflection over early loves, and what they led to, which took me at last miles away from Pauline Delorme, and her fascinations.

I would have liked much to learn what sort of a life my father had led of late: whether he had plunged into habits of dissipation and excess; or whether any feeling of remorse had weighed with him, and that he sorrowed over the misery and the sorrow he had so recklessly shed around him; but I shrunk from questioning a servant on such matters, and merely asked as to his habitual spirits and temper.

"Sir Roger was unlike every other gentleman I ever lived with, sir," said he. "He was never in high spirits except when he was hard up for money. Put him down in a little country inn to wait for his remittances, and live on a few francs a day till they arrived, and I never saw his equal for good humor. He'd play with the children; he'd work in the garden. I've seen him harness the donkey, and go off for a load of firewood. There's nothing he would not do to oblige, and with a kind word and a smile for every one all the while; but if some morning he'd get up with a dark frown on his face, and say, 'La Grange, get in your bills here, and pay them; we must get away from this dog-hole,' I knew well the banker's letter had come, and that whatever he might want, it would not be money."

"And had my Lady — Madame, I mean — no influence over him?"

"None, sir, or next to none; he was all ceremony with her; took her in to dinner every day with great state, showed her every attention at table, left her at liberty to spend what money she liked. If she fancied an equipage, it was ordered at once. If she liked a bracelet, it was sent home. As to toilette, I believe there are queens have not as many dresses to change. We had two fourgons of her luggage alone, when we came to the Schloss, and she was always saying there was something she was longing for."

"Did not this irritate my father?"

"No, sir; he would simply say, 'Don't wish, but write for it.' And I verily believe this indifference piqued her, — she saw that no sacrifice of money cost him anything, and this thought wounded her pride."

"So that there was not much happiness between them?"

"There was none, sir! Something there was that Sir Roger

would never consent to, but which she never ceased to insist on, and I often wondered how she could go on, to press a man of his dangerous temper, as she did, and at times she would do so to the very verge of a provocation. Do you know, sir," said he, after a short silence, — "if I was to be on my oath to-morrow, I'd not say that he was not seeking his death when he met it? I never saw a man so sick of life, — he was only puzzled how to lay it down without dishonor."

I motioned him to leave me as he said this, and of my father I never spoke to him more.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE END.

Two telegrams came from my mother. They were little other than repetitions. She had been ill, and was impatient to see me. In the last, she added that she would shorten the distance between us by coming to Dublin to meet me. I was to inquire for her at "Elridge's Hotel."

I was no less eager to be with her; but there were many matters of detail which still delayed me. First of all, all my father's papers and effects were at Schloss Hunyadi, and some of these were all-essential to me. On arriving at the Castle, a sealed packet addressed Sir Digby Norcott, Bart., in Madame Cleremont's hand, was given me. On opening, I found it contained a bunch of keys, without one word of any kind. It was an unspeakable relief to me to discover that she had not sent me either her condolences or her threats, and I could scarcely reassure myself that we had parted thus easily.

My father's personal luggage might have sufficed for half-a-dozen people. Not only did he carry about a quantity of clothes that no ordinary life could have required, but that he journeyed with every imaginable kind of weapon, together with saddlery and horse-gear of all fashions and shapes. Fishing-tackle and hunting-spears abounded; and lassos of Mexican make seemed to show that he had intended to have carried his experiences to the great Savannahs of the West.

From what I had seen of him, I was in no way prepared for the order and regularity in which I found his papers. All that regarded his money matters was contained in one small oak desk, in which I found a will, a copy of which, it was stated, was deposited with Norton and Temple, Solicitors, Furnival's Inn. The document ran thus: —

"I leave whatever I may die possessed of in personal or real property to the wife I have long neglected, in trust for the boy I have done much to corrupt. With time, and in the enjoyment of better fortune, they may learn to forgive me; but even if they should not, it will little trouble the rest of — ROGER NORCOTT.

"I desire that each of my servants in my service at the time of my death should receive a quarter's wages; but no present or gratuity of any kind. It is a class that always served me with fear and dislike, and whose services I ever accepted with distrust and repugnance.

"I also desire that my retriever, 'Spy,' be shot as soon after my death as may be, and that my other dogs be given away to persons who have never known me, and that my heirs will be particular on this head, so that none shall pretend that they inherit this or that of mine in token of friendship or affectionate remembrance.

"There are a few objects of furniture in the care of Salter, the house-agent at Brussels, of which I beg my wife's acceptance; they are intrinsically of little value, but she will know how dearly we have both paid for them. This is all.

(Signed) "ROGER NORCOTT, Bart.

"Witnesses, JOSEPH GRANES, head groom.

"PAUL LANYON, house-steward."

This will, which bore for date only four months prior to his death, did not contain any, the slightest, allusion to Madame Cleremont. Was it that by some antecedent arrangement he had taken care to provide for her, omitting, through a sense of delicacy to my mother, all mention of her name? This I could not guess at the time, nor did I ever discover afterwards.

In a larger desk I found a mass of letters; they were tied in packets, each with a ribbon of a different color; they were all in women's handwriting. There were several miniatures on ivory, one of which was of my mother, when a girl of about eighteen. It was exceedingly beautiful, and wore an expression of girlish innocence and frankness positively charming. On the back, in my father's hand, there was, — "Why won't they keep this look? Is the fault theirs or ours?"

Of the contents of that box, I committed all to the flames except that picture. A third desk, the key of which was

appended to his watch, contained a manuscript in his writing, headed "My Cleremont Episode, how it began, and how it cannot but end." I own it pushed my curiosity sorely to throw this into the fire without reading it; but I felt it would have been a disloyalty which, had he lived, he never would have pardoned, and so I restrained myself, and burned it.

One box, strongly strapped with bands of brass, and opening by a lock of most complicated mechanism, was filled with articles of jewelry, not only such trinkets as men affect to wear in shirt-studs and watch-pendants, but the costlier objects of women's wear; there were rings and charms, bracelets of massive make, and necklaces of great value. There was a diamond cross, too, at back of which was a locket, with a braid of very beautiful fair hair. This looked as though it had been worn, and if so, how had it come back to him again? by what story of sorrow, perhaps of death?

If a sentiment of horror and loyalty had made me burn all the letters, I had found there was no restraining the exercise of my imagination as to these relics, every one of which I invested with some story. In a secret drawer of this box, was a considerable sum in gold, and a letter of credit for a large amount on Escheles, of Vienna, by which it appeared that he had won the chief prize of the Frankfort lottery, in the spring drawing; a piece of fortune, which, by a line in his handwriting, I saw he believed was to cost him dearly: "What is to be counterpoise to this luck? An infidelity, or a sudden death? I can't say that either affright me, but I think the last would be less of an insult."

In every relic of him, the same tone of mockery prevailed,—an insolent contempt for the world, a disdain from which he did not exempt himself, went through all he said or did; and it was plain to see that, no matter how events went with him, he always sufficed for his own unhappiness.

What a relief it was to me to turn from this perpetual scorn to some two or three letters of my dear mother's, written after their separation indeed, but in a spirit of such thorough forgiveness, and with such an honest desire for his welfare, that I only wondered how any heart could have

resisted such loving generosity. I really believe nothing so jarred upon him as her humility. Every reference to their inequality of condition seemed to affect him like an insult; and on the back of one of her letters there was written in pencil, "Does she imagine I ever forget from what I took her; or that the memory is a pleasant one?"

Mr. La Grange's curiosity to learn what amount of money my father had left behind him, and what were the dispositions of his will, pushed my patience very hard indeed. I could not, however, exactly afford to get rid of him, as he had long been intrusted with the payment of tradesmen's bills, and he was in a position to involve me in great difficulty, if so disposed.

At last we set out for England; and never shall I forget the strange effect produced upon me by the deference my new station attracted towards me. It seemed to me but yesterday that I was the companion of poor Hanserl, of the "yard;" and now I had become, as if by magic, one of the favored of the earth. The fame of being rich spreads rapidly, and my reputation on that head lost nothing through any reserve or forbearance of my valet. I was an object of interest, too, as the son of that daring Englishman who had lost his life so heroically. Heaven knows how La Grange had related the tragic incident, or with what embellishment he had been pleased to adorn it. I can only say that half my days were passed in assuring eager inquirers that I was neither present at the adventure, nor wounded in the affray; and all my efforts were directed to proving that I was a most insignificant person, and without the smallest claim to interest on my side.

Arrived in London, I was once more a "personage;" at least, to my family solicitors. My father's will had been already proved, and I was recognized in all form as the heir to his title and fortune. They were eager to know would I restore the family seat at Hexham. The Abbey was an architectural gem that all England was proud of, and I was eagerly entreated not to suffer it to drop into decay and ruin. The representation of the borough — long neglected by my family — only needed an effort to secure; and would I not like the ambition of a parliamentary life?

What glimpses of future greatness were shown me! what possible chances of this or that attained that would link me with real rank forever! And all this time I was pining to clasp my mother to my arms; to pour out my whole heart before her, and tell her that I loved a pale Jewish girl, silent and half sad-looking, but whose low soft voice still echoed within my heart, and whose cold hand had left a thrill after its touch that had never ceased to move me.

"Oh, Digby, my own, own darling," cried she, as she hugged me in her arms, "what a great tall fellow you have grown, and how like — how like him!" and she burst into a torrent of tears, renewed every time that she raised her eyes to my face, and saw how I resembled my father. There seemed an ecstasy in this grief of which she never wearied, and day after day she would sit holding my hand, gazing wistfully at me, and only turning away as her tearful eyes grew dim with weeping. I will not dwell on the days we passed together; full of sorrow they were, but a sorrow so hallowed by affection that we felt an unspeakable calm shed over us.

My great likeness to my father, as she first saw him, made her mind revert to that period, and she never ceased to talk of that time of hope and happiness. Ever ready to ascribe anything unfavorable in his character to the evil influences of others, she maintained that though occasionally carried away by hot temper and passion, he was not only the soul of honor but had a heart of tenderness and gentleness. Curious to find out what sudden change of mind had led him after years of neglect and forgetfulness to renew his relations with her, by remitting money to her banker, we examined all that we could of his letters and papers to discover a clew to this mystery. Baffled in all our endeavors, we were driven at length to write to the Frankfort banker through whom the letter of credit had come. As we assumed to say that the money should be repaid by us, in this way hoping to trace the history of the incident, we received for answer, that, though bound strictly to secrecy at the time, events had since occurred which in a measure removed that obligation. The advance, he declared, came from the house of Hodnig and Oppovich, Fiume, who having

failed since that time, there was no longer the same necessity for reserve. "It is only this morning," he added, "that we have received news of the death of Herr Ignaz Oppovich, the last of this once opulent firm, now reduced to utter ruin."

My mother and I gazed on each other in silence as we read these words, when at length she threw her arms around me and said, "Let us go to her, Digby; let us set out this very day."

Two days after we were on the Rhine. I was seated with my mother on the deck of a river steamer, when I was startled to hear a voice utter my name. The speaker was a burly stout man of middle age, who walked the deck with a companion to whom he talked in a loud tone.

"I tell you, sir," said he, "that boy of Norcott's, what between those new coal-fields and the Hexham property, can't have less than ten thousand a year."

"And he's going to marry a rich Austrian Jewess, they say," replied the other, "as if his own fortune was not enough for him."

"He'll marry her, and desert her just as his father did."

I have but to say that I accomplished one part of this prediction, and hope never to fulfil the other.

